

Polestar 2
Why wait
to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



2 Kuwait FM discusses Schengen visa waiver with Hungarian counterpart



7 Taliban order women's beauty parlors to shut



13 'Drive-throw' recycling aims to ease Lebanon garbage crisis



16 India beat Kuwait to win record 9th SAFF Cup title



Kuwait strongly condemns Zionist aggression in Jenin

Zionist forces push on with major raid that killed 10 in West Bank



JENIN: People flee the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank during an ongoing Zionist military operation on July 4, 2023. — AFP

KUWAIT: Kuwait strongly condemns the Zionist occupation forces' aggression against a refugee camp in the West Bank city of Jenin, which resulted in the martyrdom and injury of many Palestinians, the foreign ministry said Tuesday. Kuwait categorically rejected this "blatant escalation and ongoing assaults carried out by the occupation forces against the Palestinian people, which represent a new series of their systematic violations of international humanitarian law and international agreements," the ministry added in a statement.

Kuwait, it said, called anew on the international community and UN Security Council to intervene and live up to their political, legal and humanitarian responsibilities to stop this aggression and provide international protection for the Palestinian people in line with the international law.

A car ramming and stabbing attack in Tel Aviv wounded seven people Tuesday before the suspect was shot dead, on the second day of the Zionist entity's biggest military operation in years in the occupied West Bank. Palestinian militant group Hamas praised the "heroic" attack as "an initial response to crimes against our people in the Jenin camp" where Zionist forces had killed 10 people on Monday.

The Tel Aviv attack came as the army pushed on with its operation in Jenin in the northern West Bank that has left 10 Palestinians dead, more than 100 in custody, and thousands displaced from their homes.

Explosions were heard from the camp on Tuesday and a drone hovered overhead, an AFP correspondent reported.

The Jenin raid, launched early Monday under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's hard-right government, employed hundreds of troops as well as drone strikes and army bulldozers that ripped up streets and crushed cars. "In the last five years, this is the worst raid," said Qasem Benighader, a nurse at a hospital morgue. The Palestinian foreign ministry labelled the escalation "open war against the people of Jenin".

Around 3,000 people had fled their homes in the refugee camp, said deputy governor of Jenin, Kamal Abu Al-Roub, adding they would be housed in schools and other shelters. The United Nations said the military operation disrupted water and electricity to "large areas" of the refugee camp, a crowded urban area home to some 18,000 people. Imad Jabarin, one of those leaving the rubble-strewn camp, said "all aspects of life have been destroyed, there is no electricity and no communications... we are cut off from the world to some extent".

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is "deeply concerned" about the violence and urged respect for international humanitarian law, a spokesman said. The United States said its ally the Zionist entity had a right to "defend its people against... terrorist groups" but called for protection of civilians.

Continued on Page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

Egypt envoy given notice

KUWAIT: Kuwait has handed Egyptian Ambassador Osama Shaltout a note of protest urging immediate legal action over footage on social media showing the Kuwaiti flag being set on fire, the foreign ministry said on Tuesday. Kuwait's embassy in Cairo also called for the perpetrators behind the incident to be brought to justice in a way that is "reflective of the solidity of bilateral ties", a ministry statement said. — KUNA

Egypt, Turkey appoint envoys

CAIRO: Egypt and Turkey said Tuesday they had appointed ambassadors to each other's countries for the first time in a decade, in the latest sign of warming ties. Cairo and Ankara both issued statements announcing the move "aims at the re-normalization of relations between the two countries and reflects the mutual will to develop bilateral relations". Egypt named Amr Elhamamy as its new ambassador in Ankara, while Turkey named Salih Mutlu Sen as its ambassador in Cairo. — AFP

Thai House picks Muslim speaker

BANGKOK: The Thai parliament appointed a Muslim candidate to the powerful role of House speaker on Tuesday. Lawmakers on Tuesday elected 79-year-old veteran Wan Muhamad Noor Matha, head of the Prachachat Party, unopposed as speaker of the lower house. "I will work neutrally," Wan Noor told the parliament. — AFP (See Page 6)

Serious crimes fall more than 25% in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Serious crimes in Kuwait fell during the first half of this year by more than 25 percent compared to the same period last year, according to recent data in a security report issued by the interior ministry and submitted to Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. The ministry attributed the fall in the crime rate to its security measures and arrest of lawbreakers in the country.

Lawmakers reject Iranian claims to offshore gas field

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers on Tuesday rejected statements by neighboring Iran that it intends to start exploration at a disputed gas field with Kuwait, reit-

deportation after the completion of legal procedures," the ministry said.

Serious crimes, which are classified as "worrying crimes", include premeditated murder, armed robbery, bank robbery, theft, impersonation of security men, storming homes and threatening to use firearms. The report said officials and security personnel have proven a distinguished ability in dealing positively with challenges and rapid changes, as they were able, with a firm security doctrine and governed by legal controls, to advance the national message.

the Durra field. They also called on the committee to follow up attempts on the demarcation of maritime borders with Iran.

Kuwait and Iran, which share the northern Arabian Gulf waters, have held several rounds of talks in an attempt to demarcate the borders of the Durra field, which is rich in gas. Kuwait on Monday categorically rejected Iranian statements indicating that the Islamic Republic intends to carry out a project to develop the Durra field. Oil Minister Saad Al-Barrak stressed that the Durra field is exclusive to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and before

Continued on Page 6

Xi urges SCO solidarity, Putin praises support

NEW DELHI: China's Xi Jinping urged the leaders of Russia, Iran and other Shanghai alliance states on Tuesday to boost ties and resist sanctions, as Vladimir Putin thanked the bloc for support during a failed rebellion. China and Russia have in recent years ramped up economic cooperation and diplomatic contacts, with their strategic partnership having only grown closer since Moscow's invasion of Ukraine last year.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization — which on Tuesday welcomed Iran as its ninth member — encompasses a vast stretch of the globe from Moscow to Beijing and includes around half the world's population when observer and "dialogue partner" nations are included. During the virtual meeting, Xi "called for efforts to safeguard regional peace and ensure common security", state news agency Xinhua said, adding that he urged SCO member states to "enhance their solidarity".

While China says it is a neutral party to the Ukraine conflict, it has been criticized by Western nations for refusing to condemn Moscow's offensive. Putin, speaking via video link at the meeting, his first summit since a

Continued on Page 6



BEIJING: A giant screen shows news footage of China's President Xi Jinping speaking virtually to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting held in India on July 4, 2023. — AFP



Kuwait, Hungary eye bolstering ties as they near 60 years of relations

Foreign minister thanks Hungary for Schengen support

BUDAPEST: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said Kuwait is keen on taking relations with Hungary to the next level.

The remarks came during a statement given by Sheikh Salem in a joint press conference with Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijarto to held Tuesday in the capital Budapest. Sheikh Salem's visit to Hungary comes at a time when the two countries are celebrating 59 years of diplomatic ties.

At the conference, the foreign minister expressed his gratitude to Hungary for its support to the Kuwait's Schengen visa waiver file. The two countries discussed the Schengen exemption at a meeting Monday.

Regional and international issues of common interest were also discussed during the meeting, with the Ukrainian crisis at the helm. The Kuwaiti top diplomat

reasserted Kuwait's firm belief in peaceful resolution of conflicts and that he hopes for Russia and Ukraine to meet at the negotiations table.

Kuwait is a main ally to the international anti-terrorism coalition, stressed the foreign minister presenting the state's positive role in combating radicalism.

Also Monday, Sheikh Salem held a meeting with Hungarian Parliament Speaker Laszlo Kovier to discuss ways to upgrade bilateral ties and expand cooperation in a variety of domains. Both sides mulled strengthening bilateral cooperation and developing political ties to build a sustainable partnership. They also discussed ways to enhance cultural and legislative cooperation. They reaffirmed keenness to take friendship and bilateral relations to broader horizons to realize the common interests of both countries.

The Kuwaiti top diplomat Sheikh Sa-

lem stressed the strength of relations that bind the two countries and their peoples and the common denominators that unite them, especially since they are democratic countries that deeply believe in the universal human values and the importance of stability, dialogue, peace and neutrality. Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament Kovier praised the friendly and historical relations between Kuwait and Hungary and the continuous expansion of cooperation.

Both sides reviewed the recent regional and international developments of common interest. They asserted the importance of supporting international efforts to maintain world security and stability.

Sheikh Salem began his European tour on June 26, first landing in France then to Italy, Austria and Hungary. The top diplomat sat through numerous meetings with officials and held political talks to discuss vital issues and bolster bilateral ties. — KUNA



BUDAPEST: Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (left) and Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijarto speak at a press conference on Tuesday, July 4, 2023. — KUNA

Kuwait's Schengen waiver: A timeline

KUWAIT: Since early 2023, Kuwait has been intensifying its efforts in rallying support for its Schengen visa waiver file, with Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah holding several meetings on the matter. The Schengen exemption, once in action, will allow Kuwaitis to travel to all EU Member States for short stays of up to 90 days in any 180-day period for business, tourism and family purposes, without having to apply for a visa.

Here are some highlights of how Kuwait's file has progressed over the past year:

April 2022: The European Commission proposes the abolishment of visa requirements for Qatar and Kuwait nationals.

The proposal followed a detailed assessment of irregular migration, public policy and security, economic benefits and the European Union's relations with Qatar and Kuwait, according to a statement from the commission. The commission put forward the proposal, which is considered the first step towards granting a Schengen visa exemption, after ensuring the two countries meet the necessary criteria.

June 2022: The Council of the European Union approves negotiating the mandate on the liberalization of short-stay visas for Kuwait and Qatar with the European Parliament. The process for approving the visa waiver requires the parliament's vote and approval from European Union member states.

November 2022: Kuwaiti officials hold a meeting with European Parliament officials who visited the country to discuss the matter, including Vice President of the European Commission Margaritis Schinas, who expected a positive outcome once the vote is taken.

Schinas said the European Parliament would vote on the issue in late November, with member states making the final decision "a bit later". His presence in Kuwait, Schinas said at the time, symbolized "entering the last stages of providing visa-free status for Kuwaiti citizens to travel to the EU".

Later that month, the lead justice and home affairs (LIBE) committee, which oversees the visa issue, postponed a vote on the issue following several death penalties enacted in Kuwait, after which EU parliamentarians moved to include a clause about the death penalty in the waiver proposal.

December 2022: On December 1, the committee voted in favor of lifting the Schengen visa requirement for Kuwait and Qatar, but made the suspension of the death penalty a condition for Kuwait granting visa-free travel to the EU.

In mid-December, EU Parliamentarians were set to vote to allow nationals of both countries to travel without a visa, but that was put on hold after Belgian prosecutors charged Parliament Vice President Eva Kaili and three others with corruption as part of a major investigation into an alleged illicit influence campaign by Qatar, according to Politico. The file was referred to another committee pending results of the investigation.

January – July 2023: Foreign Minister Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah holds several meetings with European diplomats and politicians, where the Schengen waiver was high on the agenda, according to statements issued following these meetings. "We have expressed our position on this issue, and we have a permanent and continuous dialogue with the Kuwaiti authorities," European Union spokesman for the Middle East and North Africa Luis Bueno told local media in a June interview.

Sunscreen use key for protection against skin cancer

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Secretary General of Gulf Federation for Cancer Control Dr Khalid Ahmad Al-Saleh urged people to use sun protection creams with SPF 15 or higher when getting exposed to the sun for long periods of time to reduce cancer risk.

Saleh was speaking at a workshop held by the federation and sponsored by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and in cooperation with the National Campaign for Cancer Awareness (CAN) to discuss means of skin cancer treatment, with an emphasis on radiation and surgical treatments.

Dr Al-Saleh said that the most dangerous skin cancer, called melanoma, first develops in the melanocytes that produce the melanin pigment that gives the skin its color. Signs of melanoma, he said, includes a non-painful knot that has the same color as the body or a bluish red color. The knots appear on the skin, including the scalp, face, lips, ears and rarely affect the body parts on the inside.

He said skin cancer develops mainly in areas of skin exposed to the sun for long periods without taking protective precautions against the scorching and harmful sun rays in the form of ultra-violet, especially at midday.

Precautions include the use of protection creams with SPF 15 or higher, and the use of hats and umbrellas during these times. Exposure to the sun could also lead to skin aging and the appearance of wrinkles, freckles and pigmentation.

He also warned against being exposed to tanning beds that emit harmful UV rays.

Symptoms to look out for

Skin cancers are treatable if discovered early, especially after accelerated developments in the medical, technical and treatment fields used in the latest years, said Dr Al-Saleh.

He said awareness of the factors that contribute to getting cancer plays an important role in reducing cancer incidence which cannot be ignored.

Symptoms can be recognized easily by noticing any change in skin color. People should also watch out for any swelling or lumps. When cancer is discovered the tumor stage will be determined and suitable treatment will be prescribed for the stage. For example, superficial skin cancer such as Basal Cell Carcinoma rarely spreads, and the biopsy that removes the entire tumor is often the only necessary test to determine the cancer stage. Other



KUWAIT: Participants and attendees are seen at the workshop held to discuss means of cancer treatment.

treatments include radiation and surgical procedures to remove the tumor.

Surgical Oncologist Dr Mohammad Khalid spoke about surgical treatment of skin cancer, adding that the rate of skin cancer conditions in Kuwait between Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis of both genders is low and is not on the list of the 10 most common cancers for 15 years.

Skin cancer was highest on the list of common cancers among Kuwaiti men from 1979 until 1983,

and the highest cases in Kuwait women occurred from 1974 until 1978. As for non-Kuwaiti men, skin cancer was in among the top 10 widespread cancers from 1974-1993, and the same for women.

Dr Khalid said squamous cell carcinoma makes up 23 percent of non-melanoma skin cancer cases and basal cell carcinoma makes up 74 percent.

Squamous cell carcinoma amounts to 40 percent of cancers affecting the lymph nodes, while melanomas make up 2 percent of all tumors.

Artists share their opinions on how art affects community

By Munirah Al-Fayez

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times interviewed three artists in Kuwait to ask them about the effect of art on Kuwaiti society and culture. Zaina Al-Kulaib, who has over 6,000 followers on Instagram, said she started sharing her art for fun, explaining she loves the feeling of putting out something and getting feedback because it gives her motivation to grow and learn.

According to Kulaib, art is very significant because it captures the essence of Kuwaiti culture and can communicate ideas and information. She said the first time she used art to send a communal message was during the pandemic. "I had a series on Instagram related to what we as a society were feeling at the time at the height of the pandemic, and it got a lot of attraction. To me that's the beauty of art," Kulaib said.

When asked if art should be more integrated in schools in Kuwait, Kulaib enthusiastically said "100 percent yes!" "First of all, it's a way of expressing yourself and knowing who you are through it, whether it's digital or traditional art. Second, in my opinion, art should be taken seriously as any other subject in school, as it is

a skill to be acquired with time and practice," she said.

Kulaib has some advice for people interested in art. "Don't worry about finding 'your style'. It will come to you with time, and it can also change as you grow and evolve. Just have fun and draw what you like, as it can bring you joy and happiness. Create the art you like, not what people expect you to draw."

Shahad Al-Saad, an artist draws animations, said what made her share her art was to connect with others and inspire them, so she would be inspired as well. Said said she believes art is very powerful because it reflects societies' realities, interests and beliefs. For example, for her as a Kuwaiti, she likes to do special illustrations during special months, like the month of February.

Saad believes art needs to be taught in primary schools because it helps visual learners have a better understanding of certain subjects. She added that prioritizing art in the Kuwaiti society through art centers encourages amateur artists, because it gives them confidence and helps them improve their art. Saad advised young artists to "do the art you love, be passionate about it and it will reflect on your work. Always take criticism as a form of inspiration



This photo is for illustrative purposes only.

and improvement."

Shatha Abueljebain, a 23-year-old digital artist, said she has always liked sharing art because it helps the artist and people experience art, go through hard times, cope with life and get used to new environments. Artists make something out of nothing, according to Abueljebain, then they share it with the world, and through that, they teach themselves and others.

According to Abueljebain, art has been significant in Kuwait, as it speaks and shows our culture. "Art used to be more traditional and cultural; for example, in the past, a lot of art used to be about normal household living, but then it innovated and progressed. Peo-

ple nowadays on social media are using digital and traditional art, and even traditional art has progressed," Abueljebain said. "Art sends a message — it reflects who we are as a society. For example, if there is a problem in the society, it is usually reflected through videos, photos, paintings and many other forms of art."

Abueljebain advises new and young artists to find a local community, because it will help artists grow and learn and support each other. She said it is good to feel like you are part of a community. "You will be able to share your knowledge, and you might even be able to start a project together. Life without communication is silence."

Local

Zain launches strategic partnership with e-learning platform Baims

Cooperation to digitalize education sector, expand youth's digital literacy



Waleed Al-Khashti and Yousef Al-Hussaini seal the partnership.

KUWAIT: Zain announces the signing of a strategic partnership with Baims, a leading Kuwait-based e-learning platform. The cooperation aims at empowering the digitalization of the local education sector, expand the youth's digital upskilling and literacy, and provide students with the academic content and competencies essential to today's market.

The partnership was sealed at the Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) in the company's headquarters in Shuwaikh, attended by Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, Waleed Al-Khashti, Baims co-founder and CEO Yousef Al-Hussaini, and Zain's Marketing and Innovation & Entrepreneurship teams.

Baims is a leading Kuwait-based digital e-learning platform that offers virtual courses to high school and university students in 5 MENA countries. The company is one of the top success stories of the Zain

Great Idea tech startup accelerator program, and today's announcement reflects Zain's belief in the ability of local startups to compete in the market and contribute to the national economy.

The partnership aims at empowering the digital transformation of the local education sector, where Zain's vast expertise as a digital enabler and tech leader, combined with Baims' virtual courses and wide set of education services are set to contribute to elevating the digital academic tools available to students across Kuwait.

This collaboration is also set to feature exclusive offers and special discounts to Zain customers on virtual courses and other services offered by Baims via specially tailored packages for the youth. Zain will also offer exclusive academic content on Baims covering topics related to innovation and entrepreneurship.



KUWAIT: Chief Corporate Affairs and Relations Officer, Waleed Al-Khashti, Baims co-founder and CEO Yousef Al-Hussaini are seen with Zain's Marketing and Innovation & Entrepreneurship teams.

Baims operates in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, and Turkey, and aims to digitize the offline tutoring experience by allowing students to learn at their own pace with video lectures, notes, live sessions, and quizzes that can be accessed on the web and mobile devices.

Last year, the platform recorded 30 million views, with 150,000+ active monthly users and 150,000+ recorded video courses on its huge library of academic content. Baims boasts 500 exclusive content creators and tutors and is considered one of the top 50 e-learning companies in the MENA region.

Baims is one of the 10 Kuwait-based tech startups that participated in LEAP, the world's biggest tech conference held earlier this year in Riyadh, attended by over 170,000 innovators, tech enthusiasts, investors, and visitors. LEAP was the second destination of the regional phase of the 7th Zain Great Idea

(ZGI) tech startup accelerator program.

The conference presented an invaluable opportunity for Baims and other ZGI participants to learn new ideas, build partnerships, and connect with innovators and investors from the region and the world. Zain saw the need and ambition of Kuwait-based startups to expand into the MENA region and has selected this global event for its program's second destination due to the Saudi market being one of the biggest and most vital of the region's markets.

Saudi Arabia also presents a unique quality, sharing a close geographical proximity, culture, demographics, and target audience with Kuwait. This presented a great opportunity for ZGI participants to learn from the vast number of workshops, conferences, and shared experiences in LEAP, paving the way for them to prepare their regional expansion plans.

Cabinet reviews draft government program, denounces Zionist attacks

KUWAIT: The Cabinet held its weekly meeting on Tuesday, July 4, 2023 at Bayan Palace under the chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

The Cabinet viewed a presentation prepared by Minister of Finance Manaf Al-Hajeri regarding the draft government work program for the seventeenth legislative term (2023-2027). The program aims to achieve development for the country in light of the government's keenness to implement the directives delivered by HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Amiri speech delivered by HH Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at the opening session of the first ordinary session of the seventeenth legislative term to achieve the principle of cooperation between the executive and legislative authorities.

Hajj organization

On the occasion of the success of the hajj season for this year 1444 AH, the Council of Ministers then expressed its appreciation to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, King of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and to the Saudi government for the distinguished efforts and generous care that surrounded the guests of Allah

throughout their stay in the Kingdom, as their organization enabled them to perform hajj rituals easily, and safely.

Intervention for Palestine

The Cabinet then discussed political affairs in the light of the current developments in the political arena at the Arab and international levels.

In this regard, the Cabinet expressed Kuwait's strong condemnation and denunciation of an extremist's shameful act of burning a copy of the Holy Quran in the Swedish capital, Stockholm, calling on the international community to move quickly to renounce feelings of hatred, extremism and religious intolerance, as well as to work to stop the repetition of these abuses that target the symbols and sanctities of Muslims, hold the perpetrators accountable and not allow them to exploit freedom as a pretext to offend Islam.

The Cabinet also expressed Kuwait's condemnation and denunciation of the attack carried out by the Zionist occupation forces on the city of Jenin in the West Bank, which resulted in a number of martyrs and injuries, stressing Kuwait's categorical rejection of this blatant escalation and the continuous attacks carried out by the occupation forces against the brotherly Palestinian people, which constitute a new series of continuous violations of international law and international conventions.

Kuwait cements its firm position for the speedy intervention of the international community and the Security Council to shoulder their responsibilities in order to stop these attacks and to work to provide the necessary international protection for the brotherly Palestinian people in accordance with the rules of international law. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Sabah is seen with British Defense Exports Advocate, Lord Mark Lancaster on Tuesday. — KUNA

Minister, British official discuss boosting defense collaboration

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Sabah met Tuesday with British Defense Exports Advocate, Lord Mark Lancaster, and discussed boosting defense collaboration. The Defense Ministry said in a press release that Sheikh Ahmad received Lord Lancaster in his office at Bayan Palace on the occasion of his official visit to the country and talked about the latest developments on both regional and in-

ternational fronts. Lord Lancaster, in a statement, congratulated Sheikh Ahmad on his appointment and wished him success and good luck. The defense minister thanked Lord Lancaster for his kind sentiments and commended the depth of relations between the two nations. The British official was accompanied by the United Kingdom's ambassador to the country Belinda Lewis and Air force Defense official Simon Edwards.

The meeting follows a phone call the defense minister received last week from Commander of US Central Command General Michael Corella where they discussed latest developments on regional and international fronts. The minister voiced intent on boosting cooperation and joint work across various levels. — KUNA

Netizens divided on whether polygamy is the way to go

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Trending on Twitter, the hashtag #Second_Wife has gone viral, highlighting the pros and cons of having a second wife. In Islamic law, a man is allowed to take up to four wives, but he has to treat them all equally in terms of financial support, time spent with them and emotional care. However, even though polygamy is permissible, it is subject to certain conditions and restrictions.

When it comes to having a second wife in Kuwait, it varies depending on the individual's circumstances. Ghaila, who is a second wife, told Kuwait Times that as a divorcee and due to her needs as a woman, and to support her child, she was forced to be a secret second wife. She said she has a constant feeling of rejection as a second wife, which is an obstacle to her success and achieving her goals, as the second wife is rejected in society and accused of not being a good person.

Meanwhile, Talal Abdullah told Kuwait Times that the second wife in Kuwaiti society is classified into several types. "Marrying a second wife can be a marriage of desire by men who do not want the responsibility of a proper marriage or do not want to indulge in forbidden relations," he said. "The second type of marriage is marrying women in foreign countries. Many Kuwaitis do not want their wives to know. So they have a wife abroad to avoid problems inside the home, while others may take a second wife due to childbearing problems with the first," he noted.

While differences of opinion circulated on Twitter on this issue, Huda Al-Ghanim tweeted: "My advice to all first wives is to make sure to spend all your husband's money so that they do not think about a



second wife!" Ahmed Khalaf said due to the spread of this hashtag, men have begun to dislike marrying a second wife. "You made the second wife appear as a bogeywoman. Let people live their lives as they want, because people's needs differ from one another," he commented.

Mansour addressed men by saying: "Dear man, you are free. You are the one who determines your fate. Do not let the first wife dictate your decisions, to do or not. Set yourself free from her chains and marry the second." Zamer Al-Ghamdi said a second wife brings nothing but a headache. "Stay with the mother of your children, and every 10 years ask her to undergo plastic surgery to look like the one you love!"

For his part, Hamad confirmed in his tweet: "If women knew that marriage at an old age exposes them to having an autistic child, I expect most of them will accept to be the second wife at a young age", stressing that a second wife is necessary for a man if he reaches the age of 40 and wants to continue living his life happily.

Jawaher wondered why some women do not show romance, love and kindness, except when a man takes a second wife, wondering about their motives. "This kind of woman does these actions intending to sabotage the marriage of the second wife, or due to hormones that increase after her husband's second marriage," she said.

Interior, fire officials explore measures to prevent truck fires

KUWAIT: Interior ministry and fire force officials met Tuesday to discuss the factors contributing to a truck blaze on Al-Ghazali Road that paralyzed traffic for hours last week. The truck was revealed to have been carrying flammable materials.

The meeting came following instructions from First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and was attended by Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt General Anwar Al-Barjas and Fire Force Chief Khalid Al-Mikrad.

Officials discussed the mechanism by which concerned authorities will enact the measures required to prevent such accidents. They also explored ways to regulate the movement of trucks carrying combustible materials in line with international standards. In addition, specific times were determined for trucks to be on the road so as to ensure traffic safety.

Text message scam

In other news, the Ministry of Interior denied on Tuesday the validity of what is circulating on some social networking sites about the General

Directorate of Traffic sending text messages asking people to pay a fine for not fulfilling their traffic violation fines on time.

The text message includes a link to a website which people are prompted to visit to pay the fine.

The ministry said the website is a fraudulent replica of its official website. It called on people to avoid dealing with unofficial sites and verifying their validity before making any payments.

The ministry said it was working to take the necessary measures against scammers.

Passport renewals

Also Tuesday, the ministry called on citizens to ensure their passports are valid for at least six months — and renew them quickly if expired — before traveling or applying for an appointment to complete their visa procedures.

"The process of renewing the electronic passport for those who have reached 21 years and over is done through the Ministry of Interior website and the application (Sahel)," the ministry stated. The interior ministry explained that those under the age of 21 should visit any of the national identity centers located across the six governorates with their guardian.

"The receipt of the electronic passport is done through the self-service machines of the electronic passport, which are located in the national identity centers in the six governorates during official working hours from 8 am to 1:30 pm and in the evening period from 3 pm to 7 pm in the centers of (Shamayah) and (Jaber Al-Ali)," the ministry clarified.

News in Brief

Fire force controls
multi-vehicle fire

KUWAIT: Three parked cars caught fire at a yard in Jahra area on Tuesday. The Department of Public Relations and Media at the Kuwait Fire Force said the Central Operations Department directed teams from the Jahra Harafiya Fire Station to the site of the incident. The fire was extinguished without any significant injuries.

Man sentenced to death
for killing mother-in-law

KUWAIT: The criminal court has sentenced a Kuwaiti man in his late 40s who murdered his mother-in-law in 2021. The court said: "Mercy does not apply to the accused because what he committed is a violation of religion, laws and regulations. He killed a soul, which Allah has forbidden." The case dates to 2021, when the Ahmadi Governorate Investigation Department arrested the citizen, who was 47-years old at the time, after he killed his 68-year-old mother-in-law with a firearm. The man followed his mother-in-law as she drove from her home in Sabah Al-Ahmad and shot her while on the road in Al-Wafra. The woman was later found in her vehicle and died at hospital. The man was charged with premeditated murder as well as the possession of a firearm and ammunition without a license. He said he committed the crime due to family disputes.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: People watch as the "buck moon" rises over the skyline of Kuwait City on July 3, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Living in two worlds: Experience of being of mixed nationality

Mixed people embrace diversity but some never feel they truly belong

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Being a person of mixed nationality brings with it a unique set of experiences and perspectives. In a world that is becoming increasingly diverse, being multiethnic offers numerous advantages that can enrich one's life and contribute to a more inclusive society. To explore some of the aspects of being of mixed nationality and shed light on the value of embracing one's mixed heritage, Kuwait Times interviewed specialist in psychiatry at Al-Sabah Hospital Dr Ali Al-Baghlani, and Noor and Yousef, two people of mixed heritage.

"Resisting diversity and differences may confine one to a barrier that narrows their perspective at intellectual, cultural and social levels. The rapid development we witness today is a result of this diversity and openness to different cultures and societies," Dr Baghlani told Kuwait Times. Noor,

a daughter of a Palestinian father and Egyptian mother living in Kuwait, said being of mixed nationality gives an opportunity to bridge gaps between different cultures and develop wider and wiser understanding.

Growing up exposed to multiple traditions, languages and customs allows one to navigate between different groups with ease. This not only creates a strong sense of adaptability, but also encourages one to empathize with others. "For instance, despite not being related to Syria by blood in any way, I find myself sympathizing and standing for Syrians in general. That is because I am very close to Syrian people, and I do not have a bias for a certain country over another, as I am neither fully Palestinian nor fully Egyptian. Hence, I find myself open to multiplicity and diversity and can adapt and relate to more than a single country or race," Noor explained.

By having a foot in multiple cultural worlds, people of mixed heritage can help build bridges and create connections between people of different backgrounds, fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society, besides having an open mind and broader perspective on life. Exposure to different cultures and languages encourages one to explore the world and seek out new experiences. According to Noor, multiethnic people tend to have wider awareness of global issues and a stronger sense of empathy towards those facing problems or identity crises.

Because of this, they are often more motivated to make a positive impact in the world and work to-



Dr Ali Al-Baghlani



wards social justice and equality. Another aspect is the ability to embrace diversity within themselves. As for Noor, being of mixed heritage often means embracing the unique blend of cultures that make up an individual, as she learns to navigate through the differences of her identity. This further develops a sense of appreciation for diversity and people from different backgrounds.

However, Yousef, son of a Lebanese father and Kuwaiti mother, shared with Kuwait Times his struggles, which make his experience more difficult than special. Yousef said he finds himself unsure of where he might fit in. "You never feel fully belonging to anywhere specific. It gives you this feeling of being 'neither here nor there'," he said.

"Cultural mixing has a tremendous impact on many areas and customs. Therefore, it must affect at the personal level, not to mention the clear differences that extend to one's physical features, language, skin color and many other personality traits that may change because of hybridity. A society should not judge people based on their differences — one's evaluation should be based on the actions of individuals towards themselves and others," Dr Baghlani said.



Scan & Subscribe KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First English Daily in the Arabian Gulf



Tel: 24833199 Ext: 220



KUWAIT: KUNA and Azerbaijani officials hold a meeting to discuss boosting media cooperation. — KUNA photos

KUNA, Azerbaijan envoy discuss media cooperation

KUWAIT: Director-General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Dr Fatima Al-Salem discussed on Tuesday with Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Kuwait, Emil Karimov, ways of enhancing media cooperation between both countries.

Dr Al-Salem, during the meeting in her office, affirmed KUNA's keenness on boosting the bilateral relations across various media fields, hoping for further development and progress. On his part, Azerbaijan's ambassador praised Kuwait's media role in boosting the ties between both countries and expressing his appreciation to KUNA for strengthening the media ties. The meeting was attended by Deputy Director-General for the Editorial Sector Essam Al-Ghanim and Deputy Director-General for Administrative, Financial and Communication Affairs Mohammad Al-Mannai, and from Azerbaijan's Consul Mirdaoud Sultanov. — KUNA



HK leader says wanted activists should give up or live 'in fear'

Thai House picks compromise speaker as progressives seek to form govt

Page 6

Page 7

France protest violence drops sharply

Paris seeks answers as Macron declares riots 'peak' passed



PARIS: France's President Emmanuel Macron addresses mayors of cities affected by the violent clashes that erupted after a teen was shot dead by police last week during a meeting at the presidential Elysee Palace in Paris on July 4, 2023. — AFP

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday met with hundreds of French officials to begin exploring the "deeper reasons" for the country's plunge into riots after the killing of a teenager at a traffic stop. The Elysee palace meeting with around 250 mayors, whose municipalities suffered damage over a week of violence, comes as the authorities reported a much calmer night across the country.

"Is it a permanent return to calm? I will be cautious, but the peak that we've seen in previous days has passed," Macron said, according to a participant. "We all want a lasting, republican order," he said. "That's the absolute priority."

The government has battled riots and looting since 17-year-old Nahel M was killed by an officer during a traffic stop on Tuesday just outside Paris, rekindling long-standing accusations of systemic racism among security forces. Overnight violence in French cities had halved in 24 hours, the interior ministry said, with 72 people arrested overnight nationwide.

That included 24 arrested in and around Paris, where the riots first

broke out. The interior ministry said dozens of buildings were damaged—including attacks on four offices of police or gendarmes—but there were no injuries. More than 150 vehicles had been set ablaze, and hundreds of fires started in rubbish bins or other public areas. Police mobilisation had been kept at the same level as the two previous nights, at 45,000 across France. Mayors across France had held rallies Monday calling for an end to the violent clashes.

'Painstaking long-term work'

Their call for a "return to republican order" came after the home of the mayor of a Paris suburb was rammed with a burning car, prompting widespread outrage. In an overnight tweet, Macron thanked police, gendarmes and firefighters for their "extraordinary mobilisation in these recent nights", after meeting with police late Monday.

At the gathering of mayors, Macron was hoping to "start the painstaking, long-term work needed to understand the deeper reasons that led to these events", an official at the president's office said. Just under 4,000 arrests have been made since

Friday, including more than 1,200 minors, according to justice ministry figures.

'Destroyed everything'

Macron raised the idea of handing out quick-fire fines to the parents of children caught for vandalism or robberies. "With the first crime, we need to find a way of sanctioning the families financially and easily," he said, according to comments reported by the Parisien newspaper.

French businesses were meanwhile counting the cost of the seven nights of rioting which left countless shops and other outlets vandalised. "They destroyed everything," said Alexandre Manchon, who works in a tobacconist's in the southern city of Marseille which has seen some of the worst looting.

"None of this is our doing, we are just working people who get up at five in the morning so we can feed our children and families," he told AFP. Despite the fall in violent incidents "everybody worries that it may be a false calm", said Abdelhamid Faddeoui, who runs private security firm Aetos Securite Privee.

"Most of my clients are maintain-

ing a high level of protection." Employers' organisations called on the government to create an emergency fund "for those who lost everything". Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said Tuesday the government may allow businesses in the riots to suspend tax and social security payments as they rebuild.

Police meanwhile said it questioned one of the passengers in the car driven by Nahel M., who had turned himself in, to find out more about the exact circumstances of the shooting. The policeman who fired the lethal shot remained in custody Tuesday, charged with homicide.

An online collection for the family of the 38-year old, launched by far-right figure Jean Messiha, has gathered more 1.4 million euros (\$1.5 million), sparking outrage among the political left. "It pays to kill a young Arab," tweeted Manon Aubry, a European Parliament deputy for the hard-left LFI party.

Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne also expressed her unease with the initiative, saying it did not "contribute to calming the situation". A fund to support the family of Nahel has run to just under 346,000 euros. — AFP

Four killed in US mass shooting in Philadelphia

WASHINGTON: At least four people were killed and two children wounded in a mass shooting Monday night in the US city of Philadelphia, police said, the latest chapter in the country's gun violence crisis.

Those killed were all males aged between 20 and 59, Philadelphia police commissioner Danielle Outlaw told journalists, while the two children wounded were aged two and 13. Police apprehended the suspected shooter—a 40-year-old who was wearing a bulletproof vest and was armed with a rifle and a handgun—near the scene of the shooting in the city's Kingsessing neighborhood, Outlaw said.

"I don't know if he was firing the rifle at the time we were pursuing or the handgun, but yes he was actively shooting a firearm at the time our officers were pursuing," she said. Earlier local media reports said four people had been hurt in the shooting, but Outlaw put the number of wounded at two, both children. Local media footage showed police had cordoned off an extensive crime scene, which Outlaw said spanned at least eight city blocks. "We have absolutely no idea why this happened. Like I said we have this person in custody and we are doing what we can to positively identify this person," she said.

Police said they had also apprehended a second person, who they believe returned fire against the shooter. "At some point as victims were being shot, we have another person that we believe acquired a gun somehow... and returned fire in the direction of the shooter that we have in custody," said Outlaw.

Monday's shooting was at least the 341st that the United States has seen this year, according to the Gun Violence Archive (GVA), with at least 21,696 people killed—including 12,144 suicides—so far this year. The GVA defines a "mass shooting" as a gun-related incident in which at least four or more people are wounded or killed.

Last year, at least 44,357 people were killed in gun violence in the United States, more than half of which were suicides. Over the weekend, two people were killed and 28 wounded in a shooting at a block party in the eastern city of Baltimore. — AFP

NATO chief's mandate extended to 2024

BRUSSELS: NATO's members on Tuesday extended the tenure of alliance head Jens Stoltenberg for one year, after struggling to find a replacement in the shadow of Russia's war in Ukraine. The announcement comes one week ahead of a summit of NATO leaders in Lithuania that will be dominated by the Western military alliance's response to the conflict and Ukraine's push for membership. "Honoured by NATO allies' decision to extend my term as secretary general until 1 October 2024," Stoltenberg, 64, said in a statement. "In a more dangerous world, our alliance is more important than ever."

NATO's 31 countries made the call to extend the tenure of the former Norwegian prime minister -- at the helm of the alliance since 2014 -- after failing to agree an obvious replacement. Others seen as potential candidates for the post of NATO secretary general, including Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and British Defence Minister Ben Wallace, had recently dropped out of contention.

Frederiksen appeared to meet the requirements of some European allies as a possible first female leader and by being from the European Union. But NATO nations on the alliance's eastern flank were pushing for someone from their region to take the reins, to underscore a tougher stance on Russia. Britain's Wallace put himself forward but numer-

ous NATO allies wanted a former head of state or government in charge, and France insisted on someone from an EU country. Stoltenberg -- whose tenure was already extended for a year shortly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 -- has the strong backing of the United States and other key allies.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba welcomed the latest extension and said Stoltenberg has shown "strong leadership" in tough times.

Fine line

The NATO secretary general has won plaudits for his cool-headed leadership of the alliance at a time when the biggest armed conflict since World War II has roiled Europe and reinvigorated NATO. That has involved maintaining stalwart support for Kyiv while also making sure the war does not spill over into a potential nuclear conflict between NATO and Russia.

The summit in Vilnius will see Stoltenberg treading a fine line again as he seeks to bridge gaps between Ukraine's demand to join NATO and the reluctance of dominant power the United States to offer a clear timeline for that process.

Leaders will sign off on new defence plans and spending goals as the alliance undergoes its biggest overhaul in a generation in the face of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. The NATO chief will also try to push Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to drop his objections to Sweden's membership bid.

Stoltenberg had repeatedly insisted that he was not actively seeking to prolong his time in charge at



BRUSSELS: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (L) and European Council President Charles Michel (R) talk to the media as they arrive for a European Council Summit, at the EU headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

NATO. But he left the door open for the allies to ask him to stay. The extension will see Stoltenberg remain in charge through to a July 2024 Washington summit marking the 75th anniversary of NATO's founding.

Some countries were hesitant about granting him a one-year extension, for fear that choosing his successor will become intertwined with jostling for top EU jobs after European elections next June. There are also worries that the run-up to the US elections in November 2024 could disrupt the search for a replacement. — AFP

International

Thai House picks compromise speaker as progressives seek to form govt

Vote for prime minister could go through multiple rounds

BANGKOK: The Thai parliament appointed a compromise candidate to the powerful role of House speaker on Tuesday, potentially complicating progressive party leader Pita Limjaroenrat's efforts to form a government.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn officially opened the Thai parliament on Monday, more than a month after Pita's pro-democracy Move Forward Party (MFP) unexpectedly won the most seats at the May 14 election. MFP has cobbled together an eight-party coalition that also includes election runners-up Pheu Thai, but it still remains well short of the 376 seats needed across both houses of parliament for Pita to be appointed prime minister in a vote due in mid-July.

MFP and Pheu Thai had been at loggerheads for weeks over which party would hold the speakership, ultimately settling on compromise candidate Wan Muhamad Noor Matha, head of the smaller Prachachat Party, on Monday night. Lawmakers on Tuesday elected the 79-year-old veteran unopposed as speaker of the lower house.

"I will work neutrally," Wan Noor told the parliament. One of his first jobs will be deciding the timing of the vote for prime minister. The powerful speaker

role also sets the parliamentary agenda.

Analysts say the fact that MFP was unable to get the coalition to back its own speaker candidate was not ideal for Pita's prospects of taking the top job. "It doesn't really guarantee that Move Forward Party's (leader) will get to be prime minister, it just stops the conflict at this time," Mahidol University political analyst Panchada Sirivunnabood told AFP.

Ubon Ratchathani political scientist Titipol Phakdeewanich noted that the vote for prime minister could go through multiple rounds, and the speaker had an important role in putting names forward.

"This is why they (MFP) really wanted the position of the house speaker, to ensure (Pita's) name will keep being nominated," Titipol said. Since winning the May election, MFP has faced resistance from within the junta-appointed Senate, partly because of the party's controversial push to reform Thailand's royal defamation laws, which carry a jail term of up to 15 years.

Last month, the election commission also set up an investigation to look at whether Pita was eligible to run for office because of his alleged ownership of shares in a now-defunct media company. Legislators are not allowed to own media shares. — AFP



BANGKOK: Thailand's deputy prime minister and Palang Pracharath party leader Prawit Wongsuwan (right) attends the house speaker nomination at Parliament in Bangkok. — AFP

Sudan fighter jet shot down as battles rage

WAD MADANI: Heavy fighting raged Tuesday across the Sudanese capital where witnesses reported a fighter-jet being shot down and artillery and machine gun fire rocking several neighborhoods. "We saw pilots jumping with parachutes as the plane plunged to the ground," said a witness in northern Khartoum who, like others, asked not to be named citing security fears.

A source from the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces said the RSF had shot down the Sudanese Armed Forces jet. The RSF said they "arrested the pilot after he landed with a parachute", in a statement that also accused the SAF of "heinous massacres" in greater Khartoum.

The armed forces led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan have been at war with the RSF — led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo — since April 15, in a brutal conflict that has killed nearly 3,000 people and displaced millions.

A witness in Omdurman, located across the river from Khartoum's city centre, also reported "heavy clashes using various types of weapons". Others said they could see "air strikes in the area of the state television building", where the RSF had launched an attack this week and fired anti-aircraft weapons on Tuesday.

In the capital's east, witnesses also reported clashes with machine guns. The army "launched rockets and heavy artillery" on RSF bases in both central and northern Khartoum, another witness reported, with houses damaged and civilians rushed to one of the few hospitals still functioning.

Medics warn the death and wounded toll from Sudan's war is likely much higher than recorded figures, with many casualties unable to reach health facilities, two-thirds of which are out of service.



GADAREF: Sudanese fleeing violence arrive in Gadaref, the capital of Sudan's eastern state of Gadaref. Explosions again rocked Sudan's capital Khartoum as the army rallied civilians to take up arms against a renewed onslaught by its paramilitary foes. — AFP

vice. In both Khartoum and the western region of Darfur, fighting has mainly hit densely-populated neighborhoods, with bombs falling on homes and bodies left in the streets.

There have been only brief moments of respite for civilians, most of whom are trapped and have

been forced to ration water, food, electricity and medicine for close to three months. About 2.2 million Sudanese have been displaced within the country and 645,000 have fled across borders, according to the International Organization for Migration. — AFP

France repatriates 10 women, 25 children from Syria camps

PARIS: France on Tuesday repatriated 10 women and 25 children who were held in prison camps for suspected jihadists in northeast Syria, the fourth such operation in a year, the foreign ministry said. The minors would be handed over to child care services while the adults would be handed over to the relevant judicial authorities, the ministry said in a statement.

The French women had voluntarily gone to territories across Syria and Iraq then controlled by Islamic State jihadists. They were captured when the jihadist group was ousted from its self-declared "caliphate" in 2019.

The return of family members of jihadist fighters who were captured or killed has been a thorny issue for European countries, particularly in France which has suffered jihadist attacks. In France, any adult who went to the Iraq-Syria zone and remained there is subject to legal proceedings. Just a year ago France put an end to its "case by case" approach to repatriation, which had earned it condemnation from international bodies.

A total of 16 women and 35 children were brought back to France during the first repatriation operation a year ago, followed in October by the return of 15 women and 40 children. In January, the foreign ministry announced the repatriation of 15 women and 32 children, a few days after being condemned by the UN Committee against Torture, which said that in refusing to repatriate women and minors in Syria, France was violating the UN Convention against torture and cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment. On Tuesday "France thanked the local administration in northeastern Syria for its cooperation, which made this operation possible", the foreign ministry said. — AFP

Kuwait strongly condemns...

Continued from Page 1

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak urged Zionist forces to "demonstrate restraint in its operation and for all parties to avoid further escalation in both the West Bank and Gaza". Germany on Tuesday insisted on the Zionist entity's right to self-defense but urged it to observe "proportionality". The German foreign ministry said it was watching the latest flare-up of violence in

the region with "great concern". However, a ministry spokesman said in a statement that "the principle under international law of proportionality must be respected".

In the Zionist-blockaded Gaza Strip, protesters burned tyres near the border fence with the Zionist entity. The Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967. Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, the territory is now home to around 490,000 Zionists in settlements considered illegal under international law. The Palestinians, who seek their own independent state, want the Zionist entity to withdraw from all land it seized in 1967 and to dismantle all settlements. — Agencies

The Kuwaiti foreign ministry also invited Iran for fresh talks to demarcate the maritime borders between the two Gulf nations.

MP Osama Al-Shaheen also separately demanded that the foreign relations panel should debate the issue immediately. He said Iran has made some "rejected" claims and announcements on the Durra field, which is exclusive Kuwaiti territory with economic rights for both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Khaitan. "Raids also targeted workers at women's salons, hotels, transport networks, street markets, vendors selling new and used tools, repair shops, foundries and hawkers selling foodstuff in Shuwaikh and other areas," the committee said.

It indicated manpower inspectors recorded violations including working at places other than their employers. The workers have to correct their legal status through their employers or leave the country, as the company's file will be temporarily suspended until procedures related to the arrested worker are completed.

"A large percentage of those arrested were domestic workers, who were transferred to residency affairs investigations to take legal action against employers, in addition to busting five fake offices that managed operations to provide female domestic workers," the committee added. The committee stressed these campaigns will continue with the same momentum in July and will be held daily, and will be doubled after more inspectors pass recruitment procedures, job training and regulations.

Twitter chaos opens door for rival Meta app

PARIS: Elon Musk spent the weekend further alienating Twitter users with more drastic changes to the social media giant, and he is facing a new challenge as tech nemesis Mark Zuckerberg prepares to launch a rival app this week. Zuckerberg's Meta group, which owns Facebook, has listed a new app in stores as "Threads, an Instagram app", available for pre-order in the United States, with a message saying it is "expected" this Thursday.

The two men have clashed for years but a recent comment by a Meta executive suggesting that Twitter was not run "sanely" irked Musk, eventually leading to the two men offering each other out for a cage fight. Since buying Twitter last year for \$44 billion, Musk has fired thousands of employees and charged users \$8 a month to have a blue checkmark and a "verified" ac-

count. On the weekend, he limited the posts readers could view and decreed that nobody could look at a tweet unless they were logged in, meaning external links no longer work for many. He said he needed to fire up extra servers just to cope with the demand as artificial intelligence (AI) companies scraped "extreme levels" of data to train their models. But commentators have poured scorn on that idea and marketing experts say he has massively alienated both his user base and the advertisers he needs to get profits rolling.

In another move that shocked users, Twitter announced Monday that access to TweetDeck, an app that allows users to monitor several accounts at once, would be limited to verified accounts next month. John Wihbey, an associate professor of media innovation and technology at Northeastern University, told AFP that plenty of people wanted to quit Twitter for ethical reasons after Musk took over, but he had now given them a technical reason to leave too. And he added that Musk's decision to sack thousands of workers meant it had long been expected that the site would become "technically unusable". — AFP

Xi urges SCO solidarity, Putin...

Continued from Page 1

short-lived mutiny last month by Wagner mercenary group chief Yevgeny Prigozhin, thanked the Beijing-headquartered SCO for its support.

"Russia is confidently resisting and will continue to resist external pressure, sanctions and provocations," Putin said. "I would like to thank my colleagues from the SCO countries who expressed support for the actions of the Russian leadership to protect the constitutional order and the life and security of citizens," he added.

Iran joined as a full member of the grouping on Tuesday, with Tehran having intensified its diplomacy with friends and foes alike in recent months, seeking to reduce its isolation, improve its economy and project strength. Tehran's membership will support "collective security... expanding ties and communications (and) strengthening unity", Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said. Alongside summit host India, other full members are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Russian ally Belarus, which holds observer

status, was also told it would become a member at the next SCO summit.

Iran's membership feeds concerns of some Western critics worried about "Russia, China, Pakistan and Iran coming together, so there is a collection of countries that are inherently anti-Western in their orientation", said Harsh V Pant, a professor with King's College London. But he said SCO was not that organization. "If this kind of an axis is to be formed, it will be formed independent of the SCO, because the Central Asians and countries like India do not see SCO as inherently anti-West," Pant told AFP.

On Tuesday, China's Xi warned against "color revolutions" and a "new Cold War", according to a state media readout of his speech to the SCO summit. "We must be highly vigilant against external forces fomenting a 'new Cold War' and creating confrontation in the region, and resolutely oppose any country interfering in internal affairs and staging a 'color revolution' for any reason," he said. During the summit, the leaders of rivals India and Pakistan said Afghanistan remained a key concern. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi warned of the risk Afghanistan was a base to "spread instability", while his Pakistani counterpart Shehbaz Sharif called for an "urgent reset" in international engagement with Afghanistan's Taliban rulers. — AFP

Lawmakers reject Iranian claims to...

Continued from Page 1

Iran can take any move, it should demarcate the borders with Kuwait. Durra is rich in natural gas and sits on assets totaling seven trillion cubic feet.

Serious crimes fall more than...

Continued from Page 1

addition to expanding the circle of receiving information," the report added. "One of the most prominent factors, which has emerged recently, is the great cooperation between the security sectors and relevant authorities, such as Kuwait Customs, Public Authority of Manpower and other bodies in the ministry," the report said. The data pointed to the success of security men in solving crimes "due to the use of modern and advanced methods to catch criminals and working to prevent crime before it occurs, as well as the use of modern technology to combat crimes".

On the other hand, the tripartite security committee said it conducted 24 inspection campaigns in June targeting eight areas populated by marginal laborers, namely Farwaniya, Kabd, Um Al-Haiman, Dhahr, Shuwaikh, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Mahboula and

International

HK leader says wanted activists should give up or live 'in fear'

US State Department condemn bounties as part of China's 'transnational repression efforts'

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's leader called on eight overseas activists to turn themselves in on Tuesday, a day after police put out bounties on them for violating the city's national security law. Police offered rewards of HK\$1 million (\$128,000) each on Monday for information leading to the arrests of eight prominent democracy activists based abroad, accusing them of crimes such as subversion and colluding with foreign forces.

City leader John Lee said he supported the police action and called on the activists to surrender themselves. "The only way to end their destiny of being an abscondee who will be pursued for life is to surrender," Lee told reporters, adding they would otherwise "spend their days in fear".

All eight fled Hong Kong after Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law on the financial hub in 2020 to quell dissent after huge, sometimes violent pro-democracy protests in 2019 were quashed. Lee called on the public to assist police and said even the activists' relatives and friends could become informants. The offer has been criticised by the United States, Britain and Australia, countries where the wanted activists reportedly reside.

US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller condemned the bounties as part of China's "transnational repression efforts" and called for their withdrawal. "The extraterritorial application of the Beijing-imposed National Security Law is a dangerous precedent that threatens the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people all over the world," he said.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said

her government was "deeply disappointed" by the bounties. "We have consistently expressed concerns about the broad application of the National Security Law to arrest or pressure pro-democracy figures and civil society," Wong said Tuesday.

Australia will steadfastly support freedom of expression, she said later. Britain will "not tolerate any attempts by China to intimidate and silence individuals in the UK and overseas", UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said.

"The UK will always defend the universal right to freedom of expression and stand up for those who are targeted." The Chinese embassy in London said after Cleverly's statement Britain had interfered with China's internal affairs by "openly (offering) protection for fugitives". "This is crude interference in Hong Kong's rule of law and China's internal affairs," it said. "China expresses strong dissatisfaction and firmly opposes this."

'I'm not afraid'

Hong Kong leader Lee, asked about the criticism abroad, said the city was not unique in having a national security law that was enforceable internationally. "I'm not afraid of any political pressure that is put on us because we do what we believe is right," Lee said.

Hong Kong's national security law has led to the shutdown of scores of civil society groups, political parties and pro-democracy media outlets since it was enacted three years ago. It has also weakened the firewall that once separated Hong Kong's legal system from that of mainland China.



HONG KONG: Veteran activist Tsang Kin-shing (R) shows media a sign reading "Is speaking our mind a crime?" before hosting the last broadcasted show of Citizens' Radio in Hong Kong on June 30, 2023. — AFP

Police have arrested 260 people under the national security law so far, with 79 of them convicted or awaiting sentencing in Hong Kong. While the law is meant to include people outside the city, officials have not specified how external enforcement is possible. The eight wanted activists include former pro-democracy lawmakers Nathan Law, Ted Hui and Dennis Kwok. Veteran unionist Mung Siu-tat is also among the wanted, along with activists Elmer Yuen, Finn Lau, Anna Kwok and Kevin Yam.

Anna Kwok told AFP the bounties may indirect-

ly lead to threats against those on the wanted list. "(The authorities) want pro-Beijing members of the general public to be driven by populism and to bring us inconveniences or even physical threats," she said. But she added: "I am not afraid." "Actually, what they did makes me see even more clearly that what I have been doing is right." The other activists were equally defiant. "I am just a Hong Konger who speaks out for Hong Kongers," Nathan Law wrote on Twitter Monday. "We should not limit ourselves, self-censor, be intimidated, or live in fear." — AFP



KABUL: Women walks past a beauty salon at the Shahr-e Naw area in Kabul on July 4, 2023. Afghanistan's Taliban authorities have ordered beauty parlors across the country to shut within a month, the vice ministry confirmed. — AFP

Afghan Taliban order women's beauty parlors to shut

KABUL: Afghanistan's Taliban authorities have ordered beauty parlors across the country to shut within a month, the vice ministry confirmed Tuesday, the latest curb to squeeze women out of public life.

The order will force the closure of thousands of businesses run by women—often the only source of income for households—and outlaw one of the few remaining opportunities for them to socialise away from home. "I think it would have been good if women did not exist at all in this society," said the manager of a Kabul parlor who asked not to be identified. "I am saying this now: I wish I did not exist. I wish we were not born in Afghanistan, or were not from Afghanistan." Since seizing power in August 2021, the Taliban government has barred girls and women from high schools and universities, banned them from parks, funfairs and gyms, and ordered them to cover up in public. Women have also mostly been barred from working for the United Nations or NGOs, and thousands have been sacked from government jobs or are being paid to stay at home.

Mohammad Sadeq Akif Muhajir, spokesman for the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice, would not say why the order had been given. "Once they are closed then we will share the reason with the media," he told AFP.

He said the businesses had been given time to close their affairs so they could use up their stock without incurring losses. A copy of the order seen by AFP said it was "based on verbal instruction from the supreme leader" Hibatullah Akhundzada.

'Chat and gossip'

Beauty parlors mushroomed across Kabul and other Afghan cities in the 20 years that US-led forces occupied the country. They were seen as a safe place to gather and socialise away from men and provided vital business opportunities for women.

"Women used to chat, gossip. There was no fighting here, no noise," said a salon worker who asked to be identified only as Neelab. "When we see some happy and active faces here, we are also refreshed. The salon has a very important role; this place makes us feel comfortable."

Another salon manager said she employed 25 women who were all breadwinners for their families. "All of them are heartbroken... what should they do?" she said. A report to the UN's Human Rights Council last week by Richard Bennett, the special rapporteur for Afghanistan, said the plight of women and girls in Afghanistan "was among the worst in the world".

"Grave, systematic and institutionalized discrimination against women and girls is at the heart of Taliban ideology and rule, which also gives rise to concerns that they may be responsible for gender apartheid," Bennett said.—AFP

China warns of 'multiple natural disasters' in July

BEIJING: Chinese authorities have warned of extreme weather and "multiple natural disasters" in the coming month, as heavy rain damaged infrastructure and forced thousands to be evacuated. An alert was in place on Tuesday for rain-triggered disasters in large swathes of central and southwestern China, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

Meteorological authorities have warned the country will face "multiple natural disasters in July, including floods, severe convection weather, typhoons and high temperatures", the agency said.

And in a sign of the damage caused by the downpours, workers Tuesday discovered that a closed-off railway bridge on the outskirts of southwestern metropolis Chongqing had collapsed after it was "damaged by the impact of mountain torrents", state broadcaster CCTV said.

More than 400 emergency personnel have been sent to survey the damage and secure the area, with dozens of trains redirected, according to CCTV, which did not say if there were any casualties. In the neighbouring province of Sichuan, authorities Tuesday said more than 460,000 had been affected by the heavy rain this month. Xinhua reported.

About 85,000 people have been evacuated from their homes as a result of the rain, officials said, with



CHONGQING: Paramilitary policemen clear a street after flooding caused by heavy rains in China's southwestern Chongqing. — AFP

Belarus opposition head says that jailed husband died

MOSCOW: Belarusian opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya said on Tuesday she received an anonymous message saying her jailed husband Sergei Tikhanovsky, who she has not heard from since March, was dead.

"Today I received a very strange and horrifying message. An unknown person wrote that my husband, Siarhei, has died in Zhodino prison," Tikhanovskaya said in English on Twitter. "There is no evidence or proof for this claim. This isn't the first time such rumors have circulated and I don't know how to comment on this. I haven't heard from Siarhei since March 9 and lawyers are denied access to him," she wrote.

Belarus is an authoritarian state in which opposition voices and independent media have been stifled during President Alexander Lukashenko's nearly three decades in power. The Belarusian human rights

"flash floods in mountainous areas" and "possible mudslides in some parts" expected this week. More than 10,000 people have also been evacuated after floods in the central Henan province damaged more than 2,000 homes, provincial officials said on Sunday. And over the weekend, dozens of homes and roads were damaged in Shaanxi province during "once-in-fifty-years" torrential rains, the Communist Party-owned Chongqing Daily said Monday.

Chinese media published footage of cars drifting down a flooded road in Hunan last week, with murky torrents gushing past apartment blocks and shops.

Scientists say rising global temperatures—caused largely by burning fossil fuels—are aggravating extreme weather worldwide, and many countries in Asia have experienced deadly heat waves and record temperatures in recent weeks.

China is the world's largest emitter of the greenhouse gases that drive climate change, responsible for roughly a quarter of all current carbon pollution.

The country has set a target of peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality 30 years later. The floods coincided with record heat waves in other parts of China, with the country's National Meteorological Center warning residents in the capital Beijing and a dozen other regions to stay indoors with temperatures over 35 degrees Celsius.

China recorded an average of 4.1 days each month in the first half of this year in which temperatures exceeded 35 degrees, the highest since national records began in 1961, according to a National Meteorological Center statement on Sunday. In June, Beijing sweltered through a total of 14 days of temperatures exceeding 35 degrees, matching the record set in July 2000, according to the state-run Beijing Evening News. — AFP

News in Brief

10 swept away in river

KUALA LUMPUR: Ten members of a single family were swept away in a river surge in Malaysia, with seven bodies found just under 25 kilometres from where they had been swimming, a senior police official said Tuesday. The tragedy happened last Friday at the Jeram Mawar waterfall located deep in a forest in the district of Chukai in the eastern state of Terengganu. Local police chief Hanyan Ramlan told AFP that nine of the victims were related and the other was a fiancée. "I believe they were swimming in the river on Friday when a sudden surge in water swept them away. It happened very fast and the water level rose up to three metres," Hanyan said. "They were caught in a deadly surprise." Hanyan said the victims were aged between four and 40 years old, and the seven bodies were found about 24 kilometres (15 miles) from the scene of the accident. — AFP

Man charged in US house fire

WASHINGTON: A man has been charged with murder after six bodies were found at the scene of a house fire in South Carolina, including his young daughter, authorities said Monday. Police received an emergency call Sunday alerting them to a fire and stabbing in the town of Green Pond, with multiple victims still inside the home, Colleton County Sheriff Guerry Hill told a news conference. Officers arrived to find the house in flames and outside was a teenager who had been stabbed, Hill said. The teen, who was hospitalized in critical condition, told police the first name of the suspect. Hill said the suspect was arrested nearby and named him as 33-year-old Ryan Manigo. "At this time we do not have a motive," Hill said. — AFP

Tunisian stabbed to death

TUNIS: Three African migrants have been arrested as suspects in the stabbing death of a local man in Tunisia's coastal city of Sfax, a court spokesman said on Tuesday. Sfax, Tunisia's second-largest city, is a departure point for many migrants hoping to reach Italy, and tensions have been rising there for months. Police fired tear gas Sunday to disperse residents and migrants throwing stones at each other. Faouzi Masmoudi, spokesman for the Sfax prosecutor, said the victim, aged in his early 40s, was fatally stabbed late Monday during a scuffle between local residents and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa. Masmoudi said three suspects, from Cameroon according to initial information, had been arrested. Locals in Sfax regularly protest the presence of the migrants and call for them to leave. — AFP

French train operator fined

PARIS: A French court on Tuesday found France's national rail operator guilty of negligence after a departing train ran over a cat that had escaped from a traveller's bag, in an incident that outraged animal rights groups. The owners of Neko—which means "cat" in Japanese—accused rail staff of cruelty after they refused to delay a high-speed service from Paris to Bordeaux in January after their pet jumped on the tracks. The death sparked demonstrations and an online petition of more than 100,000 signatures, with Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin declaring himself at the time to be "particularly shocked". An animal rights charity filed a legal complaint afterwards against the SNCF national railways for "serious abuse and cruelty leading to the death of an animal". That charge allows for a fine of up to 75,000 euros (more than \$80,000) and a five-year jail sentence, but a Paris court fined SNCF 1,000 euros for "negligence" on Tuesday, ruling the pet's killing had been caused "involuntarily". — AFP

organisation Viasna says there are now more than 1,500 political prisoners in Belarus.

Tikhanovsky planned to run against Lukashenko in the August 2020 presidential election but was arrested and detained before the vote. His wife Svetlana—a political novice at the time of his arrest—took his place in the polls and was widely believed to have won the election.

In 2021, Tikhanovsky was sentenced to 18 years in prison following a months-long trial in which he was found guilty of organising riots and inciting social hatred, according to state media. A charismatic activist, Tikhanovsky, coined a new insult for Lukashenko when he called him a "cockroach" and his campaign slogan was "Stop the cockroach."

His supporters waved slippers—often used to kill the insects—at protests. Tikhanovskaya wrote on Facebook that she thought the message about her husband's death could be "another attempt by the regime to put pressure not only on political prisoners... but also on their families".

"I worry about Siarhei every day. It is very difficult to live when you do not know if your husband is dead or not," she wrote. Tikhanovskaya now lives in exile in neighbouring Lithuania and has been sentenced in absentia to 15 years in prison. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 2023

Britain's public health service at 75: Now on life support?

Sunak acknowledges NHS is under strain after pandemic

LONDON: Deeply loved but wracked by crisis, Britain's National Health Service (NHS) on Wednesday marks 75 years since it was founded as the Western world's first universal, free healthcare system.

In a secular age, the NHS is the closest thing Britain has to a national religion—devoutly cherished, with levels of public support higher than the royal family or any other British institution.

It was founded three years after World War II by a pioneering Labour government on the principle that everyone should access top-quality healthcare funded by general taxation, free at the point of care. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, whose parents were an NHS doctor and a pharmacist, paid tribute last week as he outlined a 15-year plan aimed at recruiting hundreds of thousands of new health staff.

"For every minute of every day of every one of those 75 years, the NHS has been kept going by the millions of people who've worked for it. To them on behalf of a grateful nation, I want to say: thank you," he said. "I feel a powerful sense of responsibility to make sure that their legacy endures. And to make sure the NHS is there for our children and grandchildren, just as it was there for us."

Like Sunak's parents, immigrant staff were pivotal to the NHS's early growth, helping to remake the face of Britain itself in the decades after the war. Its centrality to national life was underscored in a memorable dance sequence featuring NHS staff and patients during the opening of the London Olympics in 2012. Justin Bieber remixed his hit "Holy" with an NHS choir for Christmas 2020, in a year when the public, clapping on their doorsteps, paid tribute to medics battling the COVID pandemic.

Sickly state

Sunak's new workforce plan, however, is recognition that the NHS is under unprecedented strain following the pandemic, even though the government spends nearly 12 percent of its budget on health-care—by far its single biggest item. Demoralized doctors and nurses have been striking for better pay, an ageing and unfit population needs ever-more complex treatment, cancers go undiagnosed for lack of scanners, and hospitals are crumbling.

Sumi Manirajan, deputy chair of the British Medical Association's junior doctors committee, accused



EDINBURGH, UK: Britain's King Charles III (second left) and Queen Camilla (left) meet patients and staff as they visit NHS Lothian's Medicine of the Elderly Meaningful Activity Centre at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh in Edinburgh on July 4, 2023. — AFP

Sunak's Conservative government of failing to value doctors. "And what that leads to is doctors leaving the country, going abroad, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and actually it's the public that loses out," she told AFP at a protest rally by striking doctors.

"The government (ministers), they may use private health care but the ordinary citizen in the UK uses the NHS, relies on the NHS." In a report for the 75th anniversary, the King's Fund charity compared the health systems of 19 similar countries and found Britain's in a sickly state.

It cited data showing the UK performed worst in fatality rates for strokes and second-worst for heart attacks. The UK has a "strikingly low number of both nurses and doctors per person compared to

its peers" and four times fewer hospital and intensive care beds than Germany, the report said.

But opinion polls show scant support in Britain for radical reform such as switching to a mixed model of funding, with patients paying via insurance for some of their treatment, as is the norm elsewhere.

Fully 93 percent of more than 3,000 respondents believe the NHS should remain free at the point of care, based on general taxation, according to the annual British Social Attitudes Survey last year.

But the authoritative survey also found a record 51 percent were dissatisfied with their quality of care, especially with waiting times for appointments to see general practitioners and hospital doctors.

Sunak has been resisting the medics' pay de-

mands as he battles to get soaring UK inflation under control, while insisting his government is investing "record sums" in the NHS. But the service needs to be modernized via better use of digital technology including artificial intelligence, he said on Friday. Sunak argued that his workforce plan would make the NHS fit "for decades to come". But some on the front lines give a far gloomier prognosis.

"Right now, as a functional, universal public service, the NHS is failing," geriatrics consultant David Oliver wrote in *The BMJ*, a medical journal. He warned: "It may not quite be in end-of-life care, or about to have its financial or political life support removed, but without immediate action and longer-term thinking it won't see its 85th birthday." —AFP

UAE approves first license for self-driving vehicles

DUBAI: Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum on Monday approved the first license for self-driving vehicles. The license was given to WeRide company, granting them the opportunity to test self-driving vehicles on UAE roads.

"Today, in the Council of Ministers, we approved the national policy for electric vehicles, which includes building a national network for electric vehicle chargers, regulating the electric vehicle market, and stimulating related industries to ensure reduced emissions, energy consumption, and the preservation of the quality of roads that the UAE enjoys. We also approved today, within the Council of Ministers, the first national license for self-driving vehicles on the country's roads, which was granted to the specialized WeRide company," Sheikh Mohammed said via Twitter.

Al-Maktoum also announced that the UAE will be the second country in the world to test autonomous vehicles on roads. Although fully autonomous



A self-driving vehicle owned by We Ride.

vehicles have yet to make an appearance on the roads, Dubai has already carried out a few tests for driverless vehicles in the past few years. In fact, the first driverless vehicle underwent trial way back in 2016 on Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Boulevard in Downtown Dubai for a month.

Cruise, the San Francisco-based robo taxi company backed by automobile giant General Motors, will set up shop in the emirate by 2023. It is being said that The Origin, which was unveiled in January last year, will be operational in Dubai in 2023. Cruise tested the vehicles at their base in San Francisco. — Agencies

"Now they have to drive for 10 minutes to get cigarettes," Guret said as he stepped around scorched chairs. President Emmanuel Macron suggested Tuesday that the "peak" of rioting "has passed", while remaining "cautious" for the coming days.

Abdelhamid Faddeoui, head of Aetos Private Security based near Paris, said "everyone is afraid that this is just a false calm" and "most of my clients are keeping up a high level of security".

In the violence since June 27, the day teenager Nahel M. was shot by police in a traffic stop, damage has amounted to "more than a billion euros (\$1.1 billion) without counting the harm to tourism", said Geofroy Roux de Bezieux, head of employers' organization Medef in an interview with the Parisien daily on Monday. "This situation has also led to a worsening of France's image that will have to be repaired," he added, warning that foreign investors could "abandon projects" in the country.

With some shop owners talking about going out of business in the wake of attacks, Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire has vowed government aid and pushed insurers and banks to help out. "When your shop has been totally burned down, when your whole life's work is turned to ash, the state has to be there by your side," he said Tuesday, promising "case-by-case cancellations of tax and social charges for the worst-affected shopkeepers". — AFP

First baby born in NHS says staff pay rise would be perfect gift

SWANSEA, UK: Aneira Thomas holds the honour of being the first baby born on Britain's National Health Service and, as they both celebrate their 75th birthday, she says her "best present" would be a pay rise for its embattled staff. The fates of both have been intertwined since the clock ticked over to July 5, 1948, with former nurse Thomas dedicating decades of service to the NHS, which she credits with saving her and her children's lives.

As both turn 75 on Wednesday, Thomas recalled what her mother Edna had told her about her extraordinary birth. "It was leading up to midnight. She remembers the doctors and nurse in the delivery room in... a little cottage hospital at the bottom of the Black Mountains," said Thomas in the living room of her daughter's house near Swansea, south Wales.

"Her recollection is that instead of telling her to push... the doctor kept looking at the clock, and looking back at mum, and the words he kept saying were 'hold on Edna, hold on'."

"And she held her breath for one minute and pushed me out the exact time the NHS was being formed by the great man Aneurin Bevan," the matriarch of the West's first service offering free medical care to the entire population.

EU court deals blow to Meta in German data case

PARIS: Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp may need to overhaul how they collect the data of users in Europe after the top EU court ruled against parent company Meta on Tuesday. The European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled in favor of Germany's anti-cartel watchdog, which had argued that it could take data privacy issues into account when considering anti-trust cases.

One of the key issues in the case was Meta's ability to link data across platforms, which allows it to closely target adverts at users, the principal way it makes money. The German watchdog barred Meta from mixing personal data gathered on Facebook with details harvested from Instagram or WhatsApp, arguing that it amounted to an abuse of its dominant market position in Germany.



Aneira Thomas poses for a picture in her garden in Swansea on the south coast of Wales on July 3, 2023. — AFP

"The doctors were very excited because every maternity room around Great Britain was waiting for the first baby." The medical team urged Edna to call her newborn Aneira, in honor of Bevan. "It's our national treasure—I'm proud and privileged to be a little part of history," said Thomas, who goes by the nickname "Nye", like Bevan himself. It was also fitting, she said, that the first baby should be a Welsh girl, given Bevan was also from Wales.

"Nye Bevan was a visionary and I often allude to the famous words of Martin Luther King, 'I have a dream', so did Nye Bevan after watching the suffering in the valleys of South Wales," she told AFP, surrounded by family portraits and her great-grandson Axell's toys. — AFP

The European court said cartel offices were within their rights to carry out investigations under the EU's huge data protection regulation (GDPR). "The judgment will have far-reaching effects on the business models used in the data economy," tweeted Andreas Mundt, head of the anti-cartel watchdog.

Echoing many previous rulings against Meta and other big tech firms, the court ruled that the US company must ask for permission to collect large amounts of personal data, striking down various workarounds that Meta had offered. Meta is likely to need to find a different method of gathering data in Europe as a result.

"We are evaluating the Court's decision and will have more to say in due course," a Meta company spokesperson told AFP. Privacy campaign group noyb welcomed the ruling, saying it clarifies once again that Meta cannot sidestep the GDPR. "This will mean that Meta has to seek proper consent and cannot use its dominant position to force people to agree to things they don't want," said the group's Max Schrems. The ruling could also imperil other big platforms like Google, which has a similar ad-tech business model. —AFP

Billion-euro bill for business as France hopes riots over

PARIS: Joseph Guret surveyed the charred remains of his tobacco shop outside Paris, one of the hundreds of businesses ransacked in riots that have caused an estimated one billion euros across France.

"They've taken my whole life away, now I have nothing left," Guret said, his voice shaking. The 30-year-old shop owner said his tobacconist in Neuilly-sur-Marne was attacked by 10 people on Thursday night who "took everything they could" and then "burned everything". The government had counted on Saturday attacks on 10 shopping malls, 200 supermarkets, 250 tobacconists and 250 bank branches following four nights of mayhem. No updated figures have been released.

Inching through the space cut off from electricity by the light of his phone, Guret wondered "why they did this, they've burned their own neighborhood." Selling lottery tickets, postage stamps and often coffee and snacks as well as tobacco products, French "tabacs" can be a rare meeting spot in remote or deprived communities.

Business

Germany to cut 2024 spending over pandemic outlays and energy crisis

Falling exports in May add to German woes

BERLIN: Germany plans to cut spending and borrowing substantially next year following massive outlays during the coronavirus pandemic and energy crisis, a draft of the budget showed Monday. But the defense budget will hit a record high, and is expected to reach the two-percent NATO spending target, as Berlin invests in overhauling the military in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it showed.

There have been drawn-out negotiations in the three-party ruling coalition over the budget due to cost cuts demanded by Finance Minister Christian Lindner, from the pro-business FDP party, but the cabinet is finally due to approve it Wednesday. Europe's biggest economy, which fell into recession at the turn of the year, is forecasting spending in 2024 of 445.7 billion euros (\$486.2 billion), compared to 476.3 billion planned for this year.

The reduction in new borrowing is even more drastic, with 16.6 billion euros planned for next year compared to 45.6 billion in 2023. Germany should thus comply with its constitutional "debt brake" which limits new annual borrowing to 0.35 percent of gross domestic product a year, according to the draft.

After being suspended from 2020 as Germany spent huge sums to tackle the coronavirus crisis, the budget rule came back into force this year. But to ensure that the 2023 budget complied with the debt brake, the government has had to resort to creating several special funds that are outside the official budget. They have been used in particular to help households and businesses cope with rising energy prices

after Russia slashed crucial gas supplies to Europe amid the Ukraine war.

The government will tap one of these funds to ensure it hits the NATO spending target in 2024, according to the draft budget. A sum of 51.8 billion euros will form the regular defense budget, a new high after about 50 billion in the 2023 budget.

There will be an additional 19.2 billion euros from a special, 100-billion-euro pot for the military that Chancellor Olaf Scholz established after the start of the Ukraine war.

Meanwhile, German exports dipped in May after a small rebound in April, official data showed Tuesday, adding to a gloomier outlook for Europe's biggest economy. Germany shipped goods worth 130.5 billion euros (\$142 billion) in May, according to data published by federal statistics agency Destatis, down 0.1 percent compared with April. Imports rose by 1.7 percent to 116.1 billion euros in May, narrowing the trade surplus to 14.4 billion euros. "Trade is no longer the strong resilient growth driver of the German economy it used to be," said ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski. "Sluggish exports are no longer an exception but rather the new normal."

The weaker demand for "made in Germany" goods was led by a 3.6-percent fall in exports to the United States, Germany's biggest export destination. Shipments to European Union countries dropped by 1.5 percent, but those to China ticked up by 1.6 percent. Most imports to Germany once again came from China, and were up 2.7 percent on the month before.

future, stating that the younger generation is capable of keeping pace with the language of the times, including the latest innovations and rapid technological developments in the banking sector, both locally and globally.

She also noted that there has been a remarkable and evident increase in the percentage of national employment in Gulf Bank throughout the recent years, as well as an increase in the number of young employees, in comparison to the total number of employees in the bank. She continued: "We are proud that Gulf Bank is one of the leading banks that invests generously in human capital to enhance the competencies of its employees, as they are the main focus to achieve our strategic objectives. We will continue to provide them with the latest expertise and skills required to keep pace with the major banking developments that the banking industry is going through."

Al-Hajjaj also emphasized Gulf Bank's keenness to establish the standards of economic sustainabil-



in the energy transition, including the global move towards electric vehicles," said Albanese. "We are rich in all of the components and the expertise needed for renewable energy."

Regional stability

Albanese hosted Widodo at Admiralty House, a sprawling government building with prime views over Sydney's picturesque harbor. They later strolled through leafy Taronga Zoo, stopping briefly to see the Sumatran tiger exhibit.

The bilateral talks between Indonesia and Australia come at a tense time for the Asia-Pacific, and the two countries have taken starkly different approaches to the fierce strategic rivalry playing out in the region between China and the United States. Canberra has joined in the landmark Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) security pact, acquiring nuclear-powered submarines to increase its naval clout through the South Pacific. Indonesia has walked a more neutral line, stressing the need for cooperation and regional stability. Albanese and Widodo on Tuesday agreed on the importance of maintaining stability as China and the United States jostle for influence.

"All countries in the region, large and small, have a collective responsibility to help keep the region peaceful," said Albanese. Widodo said the countries of the Asia-Pacific should focus on "collaboration and concrete cooperation". Analyst Gatra Priyandita, from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, said Indonesia had been slowly warming to the AUKUS alliance. "AUKUS is still seen as posing challenges to regional stability," he told AFP. — AFP



Salma Al-Hajjaj

conduct personal interviews for applicants.

On this occasion, the General Manager of Human Resources Department at Gulf Bank, Salma Al-Hajjaj said: "The career fair constituted an excellent opportunity to attract distinguished young graduates from Kuwait University, as this is part of our continuous efforts to support and empower youth, and to develop their potential; as we align with the bank's 2025 strategy and Kuwait Vision 2023."

Al-Hajjaj mentioned that Gulf Bank is keen to attract young talents from various fields, as part of its efforts to consolidate its position as the bank of the

Australia, Indonesia look to team up on EVs, batteries

SYDNEY, Australia: Indonesia's president on Tuesday urged Australia to help it ramp up electric vehicle production, as the two coal powerhouses wrapped up bilateral discussions focused heavily on clean energy.

President Joko Widodo met Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Sydney, where the pair also discussed growing tensions in the Asia-Pacific region. Indonesia and Australia are the world's two biggest thermal coal exporters, but are anxious to shed their economic reliance on polluting fossil fuels.

Both leaders agreed clean energy technologies should become a joint priority. "Indonesia and Australia must build a more substantive and strategic economic cooperation through the joint production of EV batteries," Widodo said following the meeting. Widodo's government has grand ambitions for Indonesia to increase electric vehicle production, making better use of its vast natural deposits of cobalt and nickel.

To do so it would need to secure a reliable pipeline of Australian lithium, another key component in rechargeable batteries. Australia supplies almost half of the world's lithium, the vast majority of which is currently shipped off to be processed in China. "There is a lot that Australia can offer Indonesia and the region



SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese (left) and Indonesian President Joko Widodo (center) are greeted by local Pelangi Indonesia School children after the Annual Leaders' Meeting at Taronga Zoo in Sydney on July 4, 2023. — AFP



Germany's budget for 2024 reflects a strategic focus on defense expenditure in response to geopolitical challenges.

The German economy has been hit by a series of weak data in recent weeks, dampening hopes of a swift recovery after the energy crisis and high inflation tipped the country into a recession at the turn of the year. Leading economic institutes expect the Ger-

man economy to shrink by 0.2 to 0.4 percent in 2023. "The ongoing weakening of export order books, the expected slowdown of the US economy, high inflation and high uncertainty will leave clear marks on German exports," said Brzeski. — AFP

Sri Lanka shares rise as debt restructure spares banks

COLOMBO: Bankrupt Sri Lanka's bearish bourse made a dramatic turnaround Tuesday on the first day of trading since the government unveiled a plan to restructure its huge debt burden.

The All Share Price Index on the Colombo Stock Exchange was 6.71 percent higher to close at 10,076.64, the highest figure in 10 months. Gains were fuelled largely by financial sector shares which rose by over 15 percent after rupee-denominated bonds, largely owned by local banks, were spared a haircut in the debt proposal.

"Banking shares went up 15 to 18 percent and there was a scramble to buy them," a broker at the exchange told AFP. Sri Lanka unveiled its domestic debt restructuring plan last Thursday in line with requirements for an International Monetary Fund bailout agreed in March.

The restructure charts a course for Sri Lanka to emerge from bankruptcy after defaulting on its \$46 billion foreign debt last year.

Money loaned to the government by banks and other financial institutions will not be affected under the proposal. But treasury bonds purchased by pension funds will see their interest payments cut substantially and maturity extended by several years.

The government is offering a 30 percent haircut to its international sovereign bond holders, while China and other bilateral creditors have been offered longer maturities and a nine-year moratorium on repayments. Markets were closed for five days after the restructure plan was announced to prevent panic reactions.

Sri Lanka's unprecedented economic crisis has eased somewhat since the government secured its \$2.9 billion IMF rescue package in March. June inflation at 12 percent was the lowest since late 2021 after earlier spiking at 70 percent.

The IMF said last month that Sri Lanka's economy showed "tentative signs of improvement" but warned Colombo still needed to pursue painful reforms. Last year's crisis sparked months of civil unrest which eventually toppled then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa. His successor Ranil Wickremesinghe has doubled taxes, removed generous subsidies on energy and sharply raised prices to shore up state revenue. — AFP



COLOMBO: Vendors sell vegetables at a market in Colombo on July 4, 2023. — AFP

Australia pauses rate hikes amid 'uncertain' economic outlook

SYDNEY, Australia: The Reserve Bank of Australia left its key interest rate unchanged Tuesday, with governor Philip Lowe saying that while inflation had "passed its peak" the economic outlook remained uncertain.

The decision comes after monetary policymakers last month hiked the benchmark rate 25 basis points to 4.1 percent — its highest level since May 2012.

Lowe on Tuesday cited "uncertainty surrounding the economic outlook" as one reason the board decided to stand pat this month. "This will provide some time to assess the impact of the increase in interest rates to date and the economic outlook," he said.

The move gave stocks a small boost, with the benchmark ASX 200 up nearly 0.5 percent in the minutes after the announcement, though the local dollar fell against the US greenback. It will also come as a relief to mortgage holders, who have seen their monthly repayments rise rapidly over the past year as rates increased.

Central banks raise rates to make borrowing more expensive, reducing the buying power and demand of consumers and businesses, which usually pushes prices down. Government figures released last week showed the headline rate of inflation dropped to 5.6 percent on-year in May, from 7.3 percent — an improvement but still well above the RBA's target range of between two and three percent.

Like other countries fighting inflation, Australia is trading a fine line between trying to bring prices down without stifling economic growth and sparking a recession. Many other central banks have opted to continue tightening monetary policy in an attempt to tame runaway food and energy prices, which have been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine.

Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell last week told an event in Spain that further hikes were likely, after the bank left rates unchanged at its June meeting following 10 consecutive hikes.

In its most recent decision late in May, the Reserve Bank of New Zealand lifted its official cash rate from 5.25 percent to 5.5 percent. — AFP

Business

Mercosur calls for update to EU trade agreement

EU wants a 'side letter' to deal with extra environmental guarantees

PUERTO IGUAZU, Argentina: The South American trade bloc Mercosur opened a two-day summit on Monday with host Argentina calling for an update to a long-paused trade deal with the European Union which it said was the product of an asymmetrical relationship.

Observers have low expectations for the summit's ability to give final shape to the pact stalled by EU concerns over environmental protections, particularly in the Brazilian Amazon. Mercosur countries Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay reached an agreement in principle with the 27-member EU in 2019 after two decades of negotiations.

The EU has since proposed a "side letter" to the agreement with extra environmental guarantees, ranking South American leaders. Brussels wants any deal with Mercosur nations to include compliance with commitments made under the 2015 Paris climate accords.

On Monday, Argentine Foreign Minister Santiago Cafiero said deepening ties between Mercosur and the EU was "necessary in an international context of conflict and growing uncertainty."

For this to happen, however, the 2019 draft agreement needed an "update" as it "reflects an unequal effort between asymmetrical blocs," he told fellow ministers gathered at Puerto Iguazu.

Cafiero pointed out that under the draft deal, Mercosur will scrap tariffs on 95 percent of agricultural imports from Europe, which reciprocates with only 82 percent. And he said the agreement as it stands had an excessive focus on environmental issues at the expense of economic and social con-

siderations in largely agricultural and developing Mercosur members.

'Mistrust and sanctions'

The ministers met ahead of Tuesday's gathering of Argentine President Alberto Fernandez with his counterparts from Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil: Luis Lacalle Pou, Mario Abdo Benitez, and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The bloc, founded in 1991, represents 62 percent of South America's population and 67 percent of the continent's gross domestic product. Brazil's Lula has led criticism of the EU's environmental demands, telling reporters last month that "strategic partners should have a relationship of mutual trust, not mistrust and sanctions."

Deforestation in the Amazon surged under Lula's predecessor, far-right ex-president Jair Bolsonaro, in office from 2019-2022. And while veteran leftist Lula has cast himself as the anti-Bolsonaro on environmental policy, he told European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen in June he had concerns over the additional environmental guarantees.

Lula accused EU lawmakers of trying to legislate "outside their territory" with measures that "change the balance of the agreement." Brazil will take up Mercosur's rotating presidency until the end of the year.

The EU's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, acknowledged recently that the environmental proposals were not well received by the South American countries and said Europe was awaiting a concrete response. Given the divide, Bruno Binetti, an expert on international affairs at the Inter-American Di-



PUERTO IGUAZU, Argentina: Argentine Foreign Minister Santiago Cafiero speaks during the opening of the Summit of Heads of State of Mercosur and Associated States in Puerto Iguazu, Argentina on July 3, 2023. — AFP

logue, a think tank in Washington, said the most that could come out of the Argentina summit was "a specific agenda" with "demands." "But I don't think we are at that stage," he said. Brazil's Foreign Min-

ister Mauro Vieira said his country would submit a draft counter-proposal to the EU within days. He added the bloc would resume work on a bid by Bolivia to join Mercosur. — AFP

US manufacturing contracted sharply in June: Survey

WASHINGTON: The slump in US manufacturing continued for an eighth straight month in June on the back of weak demand and slowing production, according to survey data published Monday.

The data from the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) also indicates the ongoing contraction in the sector is picking up pace, at the same time as other sectors of the US economy show signs of unexpected buoyancy. "The June composite index reading reflects companies continuing to manage outputs down as softness continues and optimism about the second half of 2023 weakens," ISM Business Survey Committee Chair Timothy Fiore said in a statement.

The ISM figure for June came in at 46 percent, down from 46.9 percent last month, the ISM said in a statement. This was well below the median forecast of economists surveyed by MarketWatch.

A reading below 50 percent indicates that the manufacturing sector is generally contracting. Of the six largest manufacturing industries, only transportation equipment saw growth last month, according to the ISM survey, underscoring the difficulties facing the manufacturing sector at-large.

"Manufacturing remains in a sorry state—automakers excepted—as higher interest rates have depressed capital spending and the much-discussed boost from China's re-opening has disappointed," Pantheon Macroeconomics' senior US economist Kieran Clancy wrote in a note to clients. The US Federal Reserve recently announced it was pausing its aggressive campaign of interest rate hikes after 10 consecutive increases to tackle high inflation.

But policymakers, including Fed Chair Jerome Powell, have indicated that they still expect as many as two additional rate hikes this year. Analysts and futures traders expect that the next increase to the Fed's benchmark lending rate could come later this month, which could put further pressure on the manufacturing sector. "Demand remains weak, production is slowing due to lack of work, and suppliers have capacity," Fiore from ISM said. "There are signs of more employment reduction actions in the near term," he added. — AFP

NBK rewards Q'go concierge users with air tickets to Maldives

KUWAIT: Seeking to reward its customers with exclusive offers that are relevant to their various lifestyles, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) is launching a campaign offering two return tickets to the Maldives for the winner and a companion, when booking through the concierge service provider "QGo Concierge" and using its premium services.

NBK announced the following three winners Faleh Mohammed Faleh Daheem, Musaed Barak A Mohsen Al-Dhubaibi Hasan Mohammad Ali Al-Aswad, from Thahabi, private, and priority banking customers who are eligible for the draw, and used three services provided by "QGo Concierge", by making the booking and using the services during the period from February until July 2023. The offered return ticket to the Maldives are valid for six months.

Concierge service provides a variety of service mainly cash delivery, messenger services including governmental services, cash and bank deposits, car servicing and delivery, installment payments, medical, travel and car insurance. It also includes personal assistance services: Ho-

tel bookings, restaurant reservations, tour packages, sporting events, ticket acquisition, as well as airport services: Airport meet & assist (standard and VIP), limo service, travel, coordination and booking, luggage pickup from Kuwait Airport, with messenger services also available in Bahrain and the UAE.

Speaking on this campaign, Mohammed Akram Hashim, head of segments, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "We are aware that premium, private banking and Thahabi customers have a unique lifestyle. Therefore, we seek to provide an exceptional experience packed with exclusive services and offers including this campaign for Q'go Concierge users."

"We are keen to be closer to our customers, to know their needs in detail, and to design all our services and offers to meet their expectations and be relevant to their lifestyle, while offering utmost convenience for a luxurious banking experience," he added.

"NBK continues to strengthen partnership with leading institutions across many sectors, enabling it to better meet the needs of its customers



Mohammed Akram Hashim



from all segments," he emphasized.

NBK provides premium banking customers with an exclusive array of services, including: a dedicated relationship manager for our privilege customers and a personal banking officer for our Thahabi customers taking care of all customers' banking needs. It also provides them with access to premium banking lounges, diverse investment solutions including: SmartWealth and Watani Brokerage, family banking package, premium banking teller services which grants them priority in making their transactions in a quick and easy way, in addition to card home delivery service, priority status when contacting NBK Call Center.

Legal battle looms over London's vehicle pollution fee

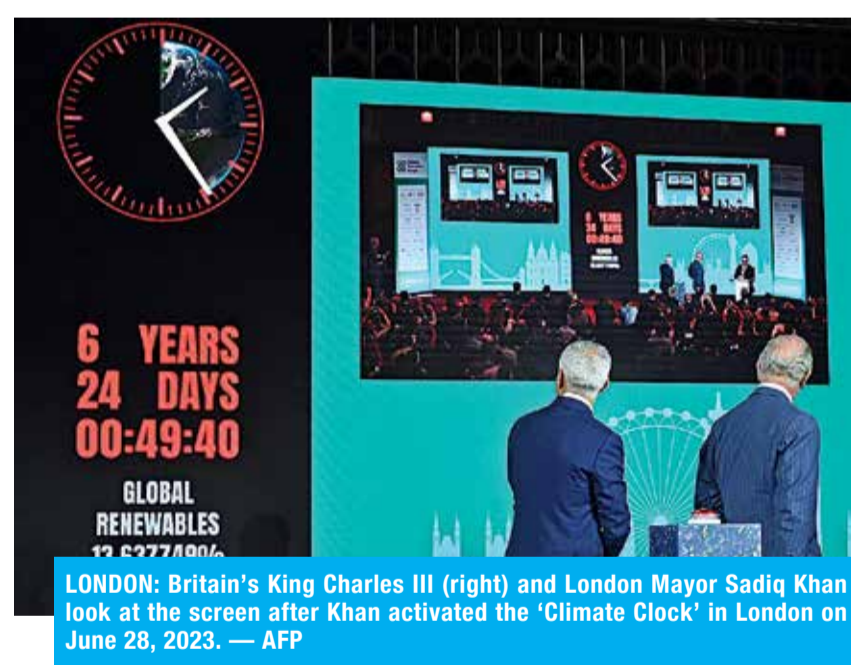
LONDON: A UK court considered contentious plans to extend a scheme obliging the most polluting vehicles to pay for using London's roads, as opponents engage in protests—and even sabotage. The High Court case comes just weeks before London Mayor Sadiq Khan's expansion of the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) is set to take effect. The scheme—first introduced in 2019 and separate from the city's two-decades-old congestion charge—requires more polluting vehicles to pay a £12.50 (\$16) toll on days they are driven within inner London.

Its extension to all of Greater London from August 29 has prompted a fierce backlash from many living in and around the newly encompassed areas, who face fines of up to £160 for each day they fail to pay. "It ain't right. They're hitting working class people again," Chris Fordham, 62, told AFP as he pulled up at a supermarket just beyond southeast London in his non-compliant 2012 diesel van. "I'm thinking about packing up work," added the self-employed builder, who crosses into the

capital almost daily, blaming the imminent new charge and other soaring costs. Several outer London local authorities and neighbouring Surrey County Council are lodging a court challenge to the way Khan decided on the expansion. Environmental group Greenpeace criticised the councils for going to court, accusing them of "fighting completely the wrong battle." "They should be putting their energy and resources into bringing down air pollution, not a key anti-pollution measure," said Areeba Hamid of Greenpeace UK. Khan, re-elected to a second term in 2021, ordered the new measure in November despite a public consultation suggesting most Londoners oppose it.

'Harmful'

The Labour mayor, 52, insists the bigger ULEZ will help improve the city's "toxic air pollution", which causes thousands of annual deaths and life-changing illnesses. He developed adult-onset asthma nine years ago and blames it on decades of breathing the capital's poor air. In a legal first in 2021, a coroner ruled that poor air quality from vehicle emissions made a "material contribution" to the death of a nine-year-old London girl who suffered a severe asthma attack. London's ULEZ mirrors similar low-emission zones to improve air quality in more than 200 cities in 10 countries across Europe. Petrol cars registered pre-2006 and diesel vehicles first reg-



LONDON: Britain's King Charles III (right) and London Mayor Sadiq Khan look at the screen after Khan activated the 'Climate Clock' in London on June 28, 2023. — AFP

istered before September 2015 are unlikely to meet the minimum emissions standards required. Transport for London (TfL)—a local government body—estimates that fewer than 200,000 such vehicles currently enter the new zone, based on existing ULEZ cam-

era analysis. But the RAC motoring group used a freedom of information request to discover that more than 850,000 ineligible vehicles are registered within London alone. Khan argues that many of those are not actually driven in the capital. — AFP

Scandal-hit PwC Australia sells govt advisory business

SYDNEY: Consulting giant PwC said Tuesday it had offloaded its lucrative Australian government advisory business for Aus\$1 (US\$0.67), as it tries to move on from a damaging tax leak scandal.

PwC Australia has been mired in controversy since January, when news emerged that staff had shared information from a confidential government tax briefing to drum up new business. After sacking a string of executives on Monday, PwC on Tuesday completed the sale of its government advisory business, which held contracts worth Aus\$255 million (US\$167 million) last year.

Buyer Allegro Funds said the new entity would be called Scyne Advisory and would have around 1,750 staff. In a statement provided to AFP, Scyne Advisory partners Tim Jackson and Ben Neal said: "We have a

once-in-a-generation opportunity to lead the change required in government advisory in Australia." The needs of clients would remain "paramount", they said, adding: "Restoring those clients' trust is our number one priority".

The sale means that Scyne could be liable to pick up new government contracts and continue work that may have been taken from PwC. The scandal that led to the sale dates back to 2015, when the Australian government introduced a series of new rules designed to stop foreign firms shaving their tax obligations by shifting profits to offshore havens. A government inquiry earlier this year found that a senior PwC staffer who was briefed on the reforms shared the information with other partners, breaching confidentiality rules.

The firm then used its knowledge of the new rules to "aggressively market" itself to new customers, the inquiry said. Australian police have been investigating the leak since late May, while the parliament's powerful finance committee is gearing up to question executives at a series of public hearings. PwC Australia has previously admitted that it suffered from "poor decision making" and that "aggressive behavior" in parts of the business allowed "profit to be placed over purpose". — AFP

EU 'concerned' about China's curbs on rare metals

BRUSSELS: The European Commission said Tuesday it was "concerned" about China's decision to impose export controls on two rare metals vital for making semiconductors amid an escalating tech battle between Washington and Beijing. China's trade ministry on Monday said exports of gallium and germanium would need a license from August 1 in the name of "security and national interests".

But a European Commission spokeswoman, Sonya Gospodinova, said the EU executive believed the new restrictions "are unrelated to the need to protect the global peace and also stability".

"We call on China to take an approach whereby export restrictions and controls are based on clear security considerations in line with the WTO (World Trade Organization) rules," she said. China produces 80 percent of the world's supplies of gallium and germanium, according to a 2020 European Commission report.

The EU imports from China 27 percent of its gallium needs and 17 percent of its germanium used, the same report said.

Gallium is used in integrated circuits, LEDs and solar panels, while germanium is found in optical fibers and infrared camera lenses. Beijing's restrictions come as international tensions rise over the production of semiconductors and a tech rivalry between China and the United States. The EU, while not adopting Washington's harder stance, is seeking to cut its dependence on critical materials from China. "The commission is currently working on a detailed analysis of the announced measures and their potential impact on the global supply chains and also on the European industry," Gospodinova said. — AFP

Lifestyle

Turkey seeks severed head of ancient statue from Danish museum

A bronze head of Emperor Septimius Severus on display at a Copenhagen museum has become a bone of contention between the Danish museum and Turkey, which claims it was looted during an archaeological dig in the 1960s and wants it back. After decades in the United States as part of a private collection that loaned it to New York's Metropolitan Museum, a statue of the Roman emperor, who lived from AD 145 to 211, was recently sent back to Turkey—minus the head.

united for an exhibition. "The head was fitted to the torso in the sense that a pole was put into the neck of the head and fitted into the torso so that the two fragments approached each other," Frederiksen explained.

Not conclusive

But in his view, the assembly did not conclusively prove they were meant to be together. "I'm not saying that they don't belong together. I'm just saying that we are not as sure as we perhaps were 25-

For Turkish authorities on the other hand, the origin of the head is not in dispute, and in particular they quote the work of the late Turkish archaeologist, Jale Inan, who took measurements of the head and body.

"The bronze comes from Bubon in Turkey. And like all objects from Turkey, we are asking for it to be returned," said Mehmet Bulut, the Turkish charge d'affaires in Denmark. Discussions with the Glyptotek have begun. "The procedure has been initiated. We have expressed our request, but it will take time", Bulut added.

'Complete models are rare'

While he is not opposed to a potential return, Frederiksen said he thinks it is necessary to thoroughly research the parts. Reuniting lost fragments is a vital and often difficult task for historians and museums. "It is obviously important to be able to reconstruct ancient statues. Most of those that have come down to us are heads without bodies or bodies without heads," Emmanuelle Rosso, a professor of art history and archaeology at the Paris-Sorbonne University, told AFP.

Heads have been worn down over time and statues may have been decapitated—sometimes during revolts or by looters looking to maximize profits by selling two objects rather than one. "Complete statues are very rare, and this is even truer in the case of bronze statues," Rosso noted.

However, "the more complete a sculpted work is, the more archaeologists and art historians have at their disposal to place it in its original context of production and exhibition," Biard noted.

There have also been reunions with heads and bodies that weren't originally meant to be together. "In the Roman period, the emperor used sculptures as part of political propaganda and when a new emperor came, instead of changing all the statues, sometimes it was just much more efficient and cheaper to change the head," Frederiksen explained.—AFP



This photo shows a bronze head of Roman Emperor Septimius Severus (145 AD-211 AD), Asia Minor, ca 195-211, displayed at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek museum in Copenhagen.—AFP

The statue was believed to have been stolen from a site in Turkey. Turkish authorities say the missing head is in the Danish capital—where it has been on display at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen for over 50 years. But many Danish experts say they are not so sure.

"We are not convinced that the two things belong together. The documentation is at the moment not very strong, we have to compare breaks of the torso and the head," Glyptotek's director of collections Rune Frederiksen told AFP. In 1979, a former museum curator estimated that the head—acquired in 1970 without any information about its exact origins—corresponded to a decapitated statue from a private American collection.

The two bronze parts were even re-

30 years ago, when we wrote the catalogues," he said. The catalogues—covering Danish museum collections—state that "nothing, in terms of composition or structure, prevented the head and body from belonging to the same statue".

As for the origin of the bronze head, it is more categorical and places it at Bubon, a Roman site in Asia Minor, in the historic region of Lycia on what is now Turkey's Mediterranean coast. For archaeologist Guillaume Biard, a lecturer at the Aix-Marseille University, there is no documented evidence to definitely identify the origin of the head.

But he argues it is clear "the torso that was once exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and returned to Turkey comes from the Sebasteion—the temple of the imperial cult—at Bubon."

'Angry, shocked' stage stars fear for future of British arts

As a wealth of British theatre and opera maestros cross the Channel to perform at French festivals this summer, many are worried about the state of live arts back home. The combined impact of Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, rising inflation and a Conservative government that sees live arts as a low priority have all taken their toll. "In the UK, a lot of small places are closing—I'm not optimistic about the direction it's going," said Tim Crouch, who is directing two plays at the Avignon Festival in southern France that starts this week.

In October, Arts Council England announced several London institutions would face cuts after the government asked it spread funds to other areas. Among the victims was the English National Opera, set to lose 12.6 million pounds next year and possibly relocate out of the capital. Funds were frozen at the BBC, the biggest employer for classical music in the country, forcing it to shed 20 percent of staff at its three English orchestras. A plan to scrap the "BBC Singers", the country's only permanent professional choir, was only overturned after an open letter from 700 composers around the world.

French artists worry about declining support, too, but still enjoy some of the most generous state subsidies in the world, and festivals such as Avignon and Aix-en-Provence attract many classical and stage stars from Britain.

Among them is composer George Benjamin, premiering a new opera, "Picture a Day Like This", in Aix on Wednesday. He was "angry and shocked" over the BBC cuts, he told AFP. "The BBC is the greatest benefactor and patron of music that our country has ever had in its whole history," he said. "Closing down the BBC Singers and reducing and humiliating their wonderful orchestras, it feels terribly sad—a worrying and mistaken moment."

'Ridiculous and tragic'

Star conductor Simon Rattle said he understood the world was going through a "complicated and difficult time", but said it was a shame that the first instinct of British politicians was always to cut arts funding. "It seems to be part of our DNA," he said. "It is a ridiculous and tragic time in so many ways," he added. "But we all want to see arts and culture when we come out



British conductor Sir Simon Rattle delivers a speech after being awarded the Federal Cross of Merit (Bundesverdienstkreuz) by German President at the Bellevue Palace in Berlin.—AFP

of this... What kind of country do we want to be?"

Tim Etchells, directing a play in French at Avignon, said the desire to move funding to less-supported areas of northern England—where he is based—should not lead to a situation where "regions are played off against each other". Dave Moutrey, who runs the HOME arts centre in Manchester, said the government had placed funding bodies "between a rock and hard place" by forcing them to pick "winners and losers" with their limited budgets.

Even celebrities have difficulty getting more experimental projects off the ground. Damon Albarn, lead singer of Blur and Gorillaz, was caustic when AFP asked him about the state of arts support in Britain. "Why do you think I spend so much time here (in France)?" said Albarn, who is staging an opera at the Lido2Paris, the famed ex-cabaret turned theatre, next year. "Last time I tried something like that in England, it was at the National Theatre and I ended up being bullied into doing a Christmas show for 'commercial concerns'," he said, with a disdainful laugh.—AFP



Guitarist Graham Coxon and Damon Albarn (right) of British band Blur performs during the "Primavera 0" (Spring 0) festival in Montevideo.—AFP photos

Yoga is better than heroin, says Blur's Damon Albarn

British band Blur are back with a new album and reunion tour—a chance to "time-travel" for band leader Damon Albarn, even if he admits the years are taking their toll. "The Ballad of Darren", only their second album in 20 years, came as a surprise to everyone—members of Blur included. "I didn't tell anyone I was writing it," Albarn told AFP during a visit to Paris, saying it happened while touring with his other band, Gorillaz, in the United States last year. "I came back in January and said: 'Come to the studio, I've got something to play you.'"

He presented the band with 20 songs and told them to pick their favorites for the album, which is out on July 21. They are a typically strong set of tunes, but mostly the softer Blur of "Tender" than the perky pop of "Girls

and Boys" or grungey rock of "Song 2".

"I'm a profoundly sadder person in my 50s," the singer offered as explanation, laughing as he said it. "It's OK—I'm leaning into my sadness. It's not that far from happiness. I'm comfortable with melancholy." Indeed, Albarn admits his cheeky-chappy persona in the 1990s was never a natural fit.

He thinks about that younger self as he considers the huge upcoming dates at Wembley—England's national stadium—which Blur never played at their peak. "That would have terrified me beyond comprehension. Panic attacks, everything," he said.

"Yoga helped me massively. Firstly it was heroin, and obviously I knocked that on the head 100 years ago. And now yoga—if I do it pretty much every day, I'm calm. That it's not taught in every school is absurd." He also takes heart from the surreal sight of all the young people coming to Blur concerts these days. "It's like time-travelling. The audience is young again," he said. "It's weird—you forget where you are sometimes."



British singer Damon Albarn performs with his band Gorillaz at the Antic Theater in Vienne.

'Struggle inhumanely'

Albarn was always the most restless of the Britpop stars, exploring new sounds and styles on each album. It brought global fame, but he said it cost him mainstream acceptance back home. "It feels good at the moment of course—people have suddenly realized I exist again—but it's been a while since England is a place where I feel welcome," he said.

Albarn's desire for the spotlight is central to infectious recent single "The Narcissist", which sees him cast back to his teenage years "with my strobe light and mirror and synthesizer in my dark bedroom, playing along with my favorite records." "That was the beginning of my narcissism," he said, though the song is also about "the fact we live in the most narcissistic age of man ever".

"I don't have a phone but I understand the principle. We all carry this machine that sends pictures of ourselves, we look at them, check them, we manufacture our own narcissism." Not that he enjoys writing lyrics. At all. "I struggle hugely, almost inhumanely,

with my lyrics. There's always a month when I'm trying to finish the lyrics of something... ugh, it's awful."

'Lost our minds'

Since Blur's first hiatus back in 2003, it has been France that has been more welcoming of Albarn's experimental projects, including a full opera he is planning at the Lido in Paris next year. "Last time I tried something like that in England, it was at the National Theatre and I ended up being bullied into doing a Christmas show for 'commercial concerns'," he said, spitting the last words.

There are also happy memories from Blur's first visits to Paris: nights at the legendary Bains Douches club ("a fairly explicit place," Albarn deadpans), and the Refuge des Fondus in Montmartre, famous for serving its wine in baby bottles. "Imagine being a 21-year-old English lad and being given red wine in baby bottles and melted cheese. We lost our minds!"—AFP

'Well known' that Kevin Spacey was 'up to no good', UK court told

A man who claims that Kevin Spacey sexually assaulted him said the Hollywood actor was an aggressive "predator" uncomfortable with his sexuality, a London court was told on Monday. The alleged victim, who cannot be identified for legal reasons, claims that the Oscar-winning star began sexually assaulting him more than two decades ago. But despite him making clear to Spacey that his advances were unwanted, the actor persisted, a jury at Southwark Crown Court in south London heard.



Actor Kevin Spacey acknowledges another guest during a reception for the 2016 Kennedy Center Honorees at the White House in Washington, DC.—AFP

Spacey, 63, has pleaded not guilty to 12 sexual offences, including indecent assault, against four men between 2001 and 2013. The alleged victim described Spacey, the former artistic director of London's Old Vic theatre, as a "slippery, snaky, difficult person". Good-looking young men were warned to be on their guard because it was "well known that he was up to no good", he said, likening the actor to his serial killer character in the film "Se7en". "He's a bit like that, a bit creepy," he said. The prosecution has described Spacey, who won Oscars for "The Usual Suspects" and "American Beauty", as a "sexual bully". —AFP



Rome's Pantheon charges for tourist entry

Rome's 2,000-year-old Pantheon started charging for entrance Monday, with tourists paying five euros (\$5) to see Italy's most visited cultural site. The building, one of the city's oldest and best loved, is currently a consecrated church and part of the proceeds from ticket sales will go towards the diocese of Rome, while the rest will go to the culture ministry. Minors and Rome residents are exempt from paying.

The new charge "won't stop many

people coming to visit", French visitor Camille Piallat predicted, as he queued to buy his ticket in the sunshine. Engineer Tim Witte, visiting from America, told AFP he thought five euros was a "very reasonable" price. The other major churches in Rome, including St Peter's Basilica, are free to visit, but museums and monuments such as the Colosseum are ticketed.

One of the best-preserved relics of ancient Rome, the Pantheon is famed for its extraordinary dome, which mea-

sures 43 meters (140 feet) in diameter and includes a circular opening through which light and occasionally rain fall.

It was built as a temple in the first century BC before being radically rebuilt under Emperor Hadrian at the start of the second century AD. After falling into neglect, it was given a new life after being consecrated as a church in the seventh century under Pope Boniface IV.—AFP



Models present creations by Christian Dior during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris.--AFP photos

Paris couture week brushes off riots with art and opulence



Models present creations by Dutch fashion designer Iris Van Herpen during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris.



Greek goddesses at Christian Dior, mermaids at Iris Van Herpen and fine art inspiration at Schiaparelli—the fashion world brushed aside concerns about riots in France as haute couture week launched on Monday. French label Celine had cancelled its show on Sunday (held outside the official calendar) because of the unrest sparked by the police killing of a teenager last week. But with violence ebbing around Paris over the weekend, the fashion federation said it did not expect disruptions to couture week, whose celebration of ultra-expensive, tailor-made dresses could not be further from the issues that have roiled the country in recent days.

Before a crowd including rapper Cardi B and Vogue editor Anna Wintour, Schiaparelli got things rolling with what it called “a Surrealist’s interpretation of a woman’s essential closet”. One of the designs was created by hand-painting a woman’s body in the style of artist Lucian Freud and then transferring it to a silk body stocking. A cardigan and skirt made from broken mirror pieces was inspired by sculptor Jack Whitten, and there were nods to Sarah Lucas, Joan Miro and Salvador Dali.

Clean lines

Christian Dior followed with a show at the Rodin Museum inspired by classical-era statues. There were no frills or heels in the new collection, which was full of clean, vertical lines and subtle shades of white, black, beige, gold and silver. But designer Maria Grazia Chiuri told AFP that “these clean lines hide remarkable complexity” and that it took a lot of work to keep Dior’s iconic New Look shapes while stripping away much of the complex constructions that underpin couture dresses. Meanwhile, Holland’s star designer Iris Van Herpen presented an aquatic and futuristic collection to a crowd including singer Camila Cabello and actress Maisie Williams. The transparent outfits included an iridescent blue pleated dress remi-



Models present creations by Rahul Mishra during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris.

niscient of the fins of a fish, while many of the models evoked mermaids.

Van Herpen, whose designs are a fixture of red carpets and feature in Beyonce’s Renaissance tour, will have an exhibition dedicated to her in Paris in November. Indian designer Rahul Mishra also put on an opulent display, with dresses that featured tigers, orchids and artisans in the designs, which he called an homage to “the imagination and craftsmanship of embroiderers”. He was one of several designers to include men among the models in his show—previously a rarity in haute couture.

Mishra told AFP it was the first time he had done so at a Paris show: “(The clothes) were not made with that intent, but when we came here, we fit them onto the boys and they looked amazing.” Monday also saw the couture debuts of US designer Thom Browne and 26-year-old Charles de Vilmorin, presenting for his own brand after a short-lived tenure as artistic director of Rochas. “I’m super happy to have lived through all this and to do my first show,” the Frenchman told AFP.—AFP



Charles de Vilmorin: Young designer turning couture unisex

At just 26, French designer Charles de Vilmorin is setting the tone for fashion’s most elite segment, the haute couture week in Paris, with his gender-fluid aesthet-

trated on evening dresses, vertiginous heels and bridal gowns.

But that is changing, with several labels incorporating menswear looks on the opening day of couture week on Monday. Young designers like de Vilmorin have set the tone. “In real life, there are a lot of men who wear haute couture. It’s not a desire to do things differently, it’s sort of normal—it’s extremely natural for me,” he said.

“Unisex just means that a piece can be worn by a woman as well as a man. It’s more a question of casting than of clothing.” His show on Monday went through three acts, from an all-white

section with large swan-shaped hats, through a more colorful act with prints, flowers and large volumes, before concluding on designs he called “sophisticated and mature, more built and structured”, all in black.

‘Very challenging’

With his slender figure and laconic look, de Vilmorin has been compared to a young Yves Saint Laurent, and already has a rich and atypical career. Born to an art teacher mother and fashion-obsessed financier father, he earned a place in the official couture roster at just 24 thanks to the back-

ing of fashion icon Jean Paul Gaultier. Coming at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, he presented his creations in online videos. He was then snapped up as artistic director for Rochas, but lasted only two years in the job.

“I got there very early, without too much experience. It was the best school to get my feet wet and learn how to build a collection and bring it to life,” he said. The goal was clearly to revive a dusty brand, which he admits “was very challenging”, adding that he was “relieved” to be working for himself again.

He received AFP in the living room

of his apartment-workshop cluttered with pieces from the new collection, his young co-workers busy sewing a coat in the corner. He does not rule out working for another established house: “I want to grow and I am open to all proposals. I can also grow in the context of a small house.”

For now, he is happy to be working with the friends who helped him through his own early shows, even if it can get a little cluttered. “We get on well but we step on each other a bit,” he said. “The apartment, which seemed big to me before, seems tiny now.”—AFP



French designer Charles de Vilmorin poses during a photo session in his apartment in Paris.



Models presents creations by Charles de Vilmorin during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris.--AFP photos

ic. “The others might not necessarily do it, but I have to do it,” de Vilmorin told AFP ahead of his first live catwalk show during the official couture week on Monday. While ready-to-wear collections have become increasingly unisex, couture has remained an almost exclusively female domain, concen-

Lifestyle



Employees at Lebanon Waste Management (LWM), a sorting facility that treats dry solid waste, in the back of their "Drive Thru" booth in Beirut. — AFP photos



An employee at Lebanon Waste Management (LWM) receives a bag of recyclable items at the "Drive Thru" booth in Beirut.

'Drive-thru' recycling aims to ease Lebanon garbage crisis

Beirut motorists pull up to a drive-through counter — not for fast-food, but to exchange empty bottles and cardboard for cash, a novelty in a country long plagued by garbage crises. Festering landfills often overflow in crisis-hit Lebanon, waste is burnt illegally at informal dump sites and rubbish floats off the coast in the Mediterranean Sea. State-run recycling has largely fallen by the wayside in a nation that has been grappling with a three-year-long economic collapse.

"The government used to be in charge of this sector and now it is bankrupt," said Pierre Baaklini, 32, founder of Lebanon Waste Management. Around a year ago he started the first "Drive Thru" recycling station and opened a second in February in Burj Hammoud, a Beirut suburb known for its proximity to a landfill. With more than 80 percent of Lebanon's population living in poverty, the poorest eke out a meagre living picking through dumpsters for anything they can sell for recycling or scrap.

Baaklini said his customers are generally environmentally conscious and among the minority "with sufficient income". People drive up to the station in their cars, register their details and place bags and boxes of loosely sort-



An employee at Lebanon Waste Management (LWM) receives a bag of recyclable items at the "Drive Thru" booth in Beirut.

ed recyclables on the counter. Workers accept everything from cardboard to plastic, glass, metal, e-waste, batteries and even used cooking oil. A sign lists the prices — a kilogram (2.2 pounds) of cardboard is worth 2,000 Lebanese pounds (around two cents), while aluminium cans are worth 50,000 pounds a kilogram.

Rony Nashef, 38, handed over bulging bags of plastic, in a country where

many rely on bottled water for drinking. Recycling "is definitely a much better solution to Lebanon's trash problem", he said. Incompetence and corruption caused a spectacular waste crisis in Lebanon in 2015, when rivers of garbage filled the streets and ran into the sea, leading to protests by thousands and harming the country's image. No viable long-term solution has since been found, and the destruction of two sorting plants in a catastrophic August 2020 explosion at Beirut port worsened the problem.

'For the community'

Behind the scenes at Drive Thru, the recyclables are sorted carefully, while the plastic is later shredded and cleaned. The two facilities have taken in a total of 450 tonnes of recyclables, founder Baaklini said, adding that the materials are sold to both local and international clients.

"What we are doing here is also about education" and awareness-raising, he said, as school students sometimes visit the facility to learn about recycling.

Environmental engineer Ziad Abichaker said recycling had always been neglected by authorities. Only "about 10 percent" of Lebanon's daily waste

load of 5,000 tonnes is recycled, said Abichaker, who heads Cedar Environmental, a group that specializes in "zero waste" technologies. Authorities were studying a national waste management plan but there has been no progress due to institutional deadlock, he said.

A caretaker government with limited powers has been at the helm for more than a year. Abichaker said "90 percent of the sorting plants built over the years" with money from international donations had stopped working, pointing to "faulty designs" and "corruption". In Burj Hammoud, Renata Rahme, 47, said the first time she rolled up to the Drive Thru recycling station, she didn't know she was supposed to separate the materials.

"Now I'm trying to do more sorting," said Rahme, a film producer who brought in a crate with lights and other small electrical appliances. "The point is not the monetary return as much as participating in the initiative," she said. "We're trying to do something better for the community, for the country, for society." — AFP



An employee at Lebanon Waste Management (LWM) receives a bag of recyclable items at the "Drive Thru" booth in Beirut.



A man receives his payment from an employee at Lebanon Waste Management (LWM) after having deposited recyclable items at the "Drive Thru" booth in Beirut.



Employees at Lebanon Waste Management (LWM) handle the newly received recyclable waste in the back of their "Drive Thru" booth in Beirut.



An employee at Lebanon Waste Management (LWM) handles newly received recyclable waste in the back of their "Drive Thru" booth in Beirut.



A woman hands a bag of recyclable items to an employee at Lebanon Waste Management (LWM) at the "Drive Thru" booth in Beirut.

Time appears five times slower in early universe

Time appears to run five times slower in the early universe, scientists said on Monday, for the first time using extraordinarily bright cosmic objects called quasars as "clocks" to confirm this strange phenomenon. Einstein's theory of relativity predicts that because space is expanding, "we should see the distant universe run in slow motion," said Geraint Lewis, an astrophysicist at the University of Sydney and the lead author of a new study. Researchers had previously used observations of very bright exploding stars called supernovas as cosmic clocks to show that time ran twice as slowly back when the universe was half its current age.



The new study used even brighter quasars to peer further back into the history of the 13.8-billion-year-old universe. Just over a billion years after the Big Bang, time appeared to flow five times slower, according to the study in the journal Nature Astronomy. While "everything looks like it's slowed down" from here, Lewis emphasized that the experience of time in these distant places was not different. "If I could magically transport you back 10 billion years and drop you next to one of

these quasars, and you've got a stopwatch, time would just be normal," he told AFP. "One second would be one second."

Cosmic clocks

Aiming to measure this phenomenon, which is called cosmological time dilation, Lewis and University of Auckland statistician Brendon Brewer analyzed data from 190 quasars collected over two decades. Quasars — super massive black holes at the centers of distant galaxies — are thought to be the brightest and most powerful objects in the universe. This makes them "useful beacons for charting the universe," Lewis said. But they have proved more difficult to turn into cosmic clocks than supernovas, which provide a reliable single flash as a "tick". Previous attempts to use quasars to measure time dilation had failed, leading to some "strange suggestions," Lewis said.

These included theories that perhaps quasars were not as distant as had been thought — or even that "something fundamental was broken" in cosmology, he said. But the new research "puts everything back in the right place," Lewis said. It also confirmed that "Einstein is right again," he added.

The researchers were able to succeed where other attempts had fallen short because they had far more data on quasars, according to Lewis. Recent advances in the statistical understanding of randomness also helped. To turn quasars into clocks with measurable ticks, the researchers had to make sense of the turbulent explosions that occurred as the black holes swallowed material.

Lewis compared it to watching a fireworks display, in which the great flashes seem random but different elements are "brightening and fading on their own kind of timescales." "What we have done is unravel this firework display, showing that quasars, too, can be used as standard markers of time for the early universe." — AFP

Medical, but hold the marijuana: New CBD source found in Brazil

In a laboratory tucked away on a sprawling university campus in Rio de Janeiro, Brazilian molecular biologist Rodrigo Moura Neto is running tests on a seemingly ordinary plant with a potent secret. The fast-growing, homely plant, *Trema micrantha blume*, is native to the Americas, where it is widespread and often considered a weed. But Moura Neto recently discovered its fruits and flowers contain one of the active ingredients in marijuana: cannabidiol, or CBD, which has shown promise as a treatment for conditions including epilepsy, autism, anxiety and chronic pain.

Crucially, he also found it does not contain the other main ingredient in pot, tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC — the psychoactive substance that makes people high. That opens the possibility of an abundant new source of CBD, without the complications of cannabis, which remains illegal in many places. The discovery has made something of an overnight academic star of Dr Moura Neto, an affable, silver-haired 66-year-old who now has a packed schedule of meetings with patent experts and companies keen to tap the multi-billion-dollar CBD market.

"It was wonderful to find a plant (with CBD but) without THC, because you avoid all the mess around psychotropic substances," says Moura Neto, who has spent the better part of five decades researching in this small lab at Rio de Janeiro Federal University. "That means the potential is enormous," he tells AFP. His 10-member team recently won a 500,000-real (\$104,000) public grant to expand his project, which will now identify the best methods to extract CBD from "Trema," then study its effectiveness as a substitute for medical marijuana.

Man in demand

Many of CBD's touted medical uses are still under research. The compound



Brazilian molecular biologist Rodrigo Moura Neto inspects a plant at his laboratory at The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) in Rio de Janeiro. — AFP photos



Rodrigo Moura Neto separates fruit and flowers from the *Trema micrantha blume* plant at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

is controversial, including in Brazil, where patients have gone to court to win the right to use it. They often have to import it at eye-watering prices, given that cultivating medical marijuana remains illegal — though there is legislation before Congress to change that. Debates aside, demand for CBD is booming.

The global market for CBD last year was estimated at nearly \$5 billion. Analytics firm Vantage Market Research projects it will grow to more than \$47 billion by 2028, driven mainly by health and wellness use. Interest in Moura Neto's research has been "huge," says Rosane Silva, the director of his laboratory, which sits off a hallway bustling with students and researchers in white lab coats.

"Lots of companies have been calling, looking to collaborate" on an eventual non-cannabis-based CBD medication, Silva says, standing beside what she calls the "magical plant."

A member of the Cannabaceae family — like cannabis — "Trema" can grow into a tree up to 20 meters (66 feet) tall. Moura Neto says he and the university may explore patenting any innovations they find for extracting CBD from its tiny fruits and flowers. But he is quick to add he won't patent "Trema" itself. He wants scientists

everywhere to be able to research it. "If I dreamed of being a billionaire, I wouldn't have become a professor," he says.

From policing to producing?

Moura Neto started studying CBD for a completely different reason: trained as a forensic geneticist, he would analyze the DNA of marijuana seized by police to help investigators trace its source. When he came across a study that identified CBD in a related plant in Thailand — another member of the Cannabaceae family — he got the idea to test for it in "Trema."

He says turning his still-unpublished findings into a drug ready for market will take five to 10 years of research and clinical trials — if it is possible at all. Cannabis, first domesticated in China more than 10,000 years ago, has been cultivated for millennia to hone its mind-altering and medicinal effects. CBD from "Trema" might not work as well, or at all, Moura Neto says. In the meantime, it's no use smoking the plant for a high. "That definitely won't do anything for you," he laughs.

Sports

Love match at Wimbledon

Power couple Tsitsipas, Badosa in town

2023 Wimbledon seeds: women's top 10

July 3 - 16

1 Iga Swiatek Country: Poland	2 Aryna Sabalenka*	3 Elena Rybakina Kazakhstan	4 Jessica Pegula United States	5 Caroline Garcia France
WTA rank 1	2	3	4	5
				
Age 22	25	24	29	29
6 Ons Jabeur Tunisia	7 Coco Gauff United States	8 Maria Sakkari Greece	9 Petra Kvitova Czech Republic	10 Barbora Krejckova Czech Republic
Rank 6	7	8	9	11
				
28	19	27	33	27

Source: Wimbledon/WTA *Under neutral banner after the suspension of Russia and Belarus by WTA/ITF following the invasion of Ukraine AFP

Graphic on the top 10 seeded women at this year's Wimbledon tennis tournament. — AFP photos

LONDON: Move over Posh and Becks, forget "Brangelina" or "Kimye", there's a new power couple in town in the shape of Wimbledon lovebirds Stefanos Tsitsipas and Paula Badosa. Only romantically involved since May, Greek world number five Tsitsipas and Spain's New York-born Badosa, who has been as high as number two in the rankings, are very much a modern couple. They already have a joint Instagram account blending their names into one - "Tsitsidos". "Best friends and soulmates. Nothing less: nothing more," purrs its tagline.

Boasting almost 57,000 followers, the platform has showcased the couple in Dubai, splashing about in a swimming pool, training and taking selfies on Centre Court. "O Grand Slams in one photo, but hey, love conquers all," they captioned one

picture. Tsitsipas recently told Greek media outlet SDNA that the relationship only started after he messaged Badosa to congratulate her on defeating Ons Jabeur in Rome.

"It was meant to happen," the 24-year-old said. "I feel like I'm falling in love for the first time in my life. I never expected this to happen and it gives me a new perspective on life." All England Club spectators, shivering in the damp and cold on Tuesday, will get the chance to warm to the couple on Tuesday when they start their Wimbledon campaigns. Tsitsipas was facing former US Open Dominic Thiem while Badosa is up against Alison Riske-Amritraj.

Golden couple

They were not the only golden couple looking to

2023 Wimbledon seeds: men's top 10

July 3 - 16

1 Carlos Alcaraz Country: Spain	2 Novak Djokovic Serbia	3 Daniil Medvedev*	4 Casper Ruud Norway	5 Stefanos Tsitsipas Greece
ATP rank 1	2	3	4	5
				
Age 20	36	27	24	24
6 Holger Rune Denmark	7 Andrey Rublev*	8 Jannik Sinner Italy	9 Taylor Fritz United States	10 Frances Tiafoe United States
Rank 6	7	8	9	10
				
20	25	21	25	25

Source: Wimbledon/ATP *Under neutral banner after the suspension of Russia and Belarus by ATP/ITF following the invasion of Ukraine AFP

Graphic on the top 10 seeded men at this year's Wimbledon tennis tournament.

make the second round on Tuesday. Britain's Katie Boulter and Alex de Minaur of Australia, who have been dating for two years, open their campaigns on the same Court 18. Boulter was first up against Daria Saville before De Minaur, the world number 17, faces Kimmer Coppejans of Belgium.

Boulter and De Minaur are renting a nearby house during the championships. "I feel like we continually both push each other," said 26-year-old Boulter, the British number one. "There's a lot I've learned from him as a person and as a player. I'm very lucky to have an insider who knows the emotions that I go through on and off the court. "He's an incredible player and, as you can see from his ranking, he does it week in, week out. I've got a lot to learn from him. I do my best to watch what he does and emulate it."

Britain's Jodie Burrage also has matters of the heart on her mind after winning her first main draw match at a Slam on Monday, which put her on the brink of breaking into the top 100. The 24-year-old has been in a relationship with Scottish rugby union international Ben White for two years and they share a home in Richmond, southwest London.

However, 25-year-old scrum-half White will be playing in France with Toulon next season after his London Irish club folded. "He's so excited. It's tough because I won't be going with him. My base is here, my training is here," said Burrage. "We've always said we'll do what's best for our careers. We've always put that first. We have a great understanding with that. That's why we work so well." She added: "South of France isn't a bad place to go and visit." —AFP



BAYONNE: Alpecin-Deceuninck's Belgian rider Jasper Philipsen (right) sprints ahead of Cofidis' German rider Simon Geschke (2nd right) and Team Jayco Alula's Slovenian rider Luka Mezgec (center) to the finish line to win the 3rd stage of the 110th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 193.5 km between Amorebieta-Exano in Northern Spain and Bayonne in southwestern France. —AFP

Philipsen sprints to Tour de France third stage win

BAYONNE: Belgian sprinter Jasper Philipsen out-paced and outmuscled the other fast men to take the high-speed bunch finish at the end of the third stage of the Tour de France on Monday. The Alpecin rider appeared to cut off a rival as he moved to his right in the finale, but the race commissioners approved the Belgian's win, ahead of Phil Bauhaus and Caleb Ewan. "It was tense but it's the Tour de France," said Philipsen at the finish. "Everyone wanted to put everything into this sprint."

English rider Adam Yates of the UAE Team retained the overall lead as all the chief contenders finished together after a 182km run from northern

Spain to Bayonne. Sunday's star Victor Lafay, who remained fourth overall, retained the sprint points green jersey, while 2020 and 2021 champion Tadej Pogacar kept second place and the best young rider's white tunic. Philipsen attracted ridicule at the Tour de France last year for celebrating what he believed to be a stage win when in fact Wout van Aert had already crossed the line on a solo escape.

A Netflix series about the 2022 Tour then nicknamed him 'Jasper the disaster'. Orange hats and green and red Basque flags were an ever present on the early climbs as American rider Neilson Powless extended his lead in the mountain classification. As the Tour caravan crossed the border fans cheered breakaway rider Frenchman Laurent Pichon of Arkea Samsic with every push of the pedals but he was caught 30km from home. Tuesday's stage four is a largely flat 182km run from Dax to Nogaro with a racing circuit finish line which should culminate in another mass sprint. — AFP

promise of huge salaries. Croatian World Cup player Marcelo Brozovic has also switched to Saudi Arabia, his new club Al Nassr announced on Monday. The 30-year-old midfielder captained Inter Milan as they lost the Champions League final to Manchester City in June. He has played 87 times for Croatia. — AFP



Steven Gerrard

Gerrard joins Saudi influx to take charge of Al-Ettifaq

RIYADH: Former Liverpool captain Steven Gerrard is the latest star name to make the move to Saudi Arabia after signing a deal to become head coach of Al-Ettifaq. The 43-year-old has been out of the game since being sacked by Aston Villa in October. Gerrard had previously said he had turned down an offer to head to the Gulf state, but has now been lured by the riches on offer. "Where legends are found. We're thrilled to announce Steven Gerrard is our new head coach," the club said in a post on Twitter.

Al-Ettifaq finished seventh out of 16 clubs in the Saudi Pro League last season. Backed by the nation's sovereign wealth fund, the Saudi Pro League is luring big names from the major European leagues with the

Neymar fined \$3.3 million for building lake at mansion

RIO DE JANEIRO: A prosecutor in Brazil fined soccer star Neymar 16 million reais (\$3.3 million) for building a lake at his mansion on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro without an environmental license, authorities said Monday. The town council in Mangaratiba issued four fines for "environmental violations in the construction of an artificial lake at the player's mansion," the council secretariat said in a statement.

"The sanctions add up to more than 16 million reais," the statement said, a sum set out by the prosecutor's office in Mangaratiba, a tourist area around 130 kilometers from Rio where the Paris Saint-Germain star has his mansion. Among "dozens of infractions" detected, the authorities listed "carrying out work subject to environmental control without authorization," capture and diversion of river water without authorization, and "removal of land and suppression of vegetation without authorization."

Neymar has 20 days to appeal the penalty, the amount of which had initially been set at five million reais, close to one million dollars. On June 22, after complaints based on social media posts, authorities found several environmental violations at the luxury



MIAMI: Neymar is seen in attendance during Game Four of the 2023 NBA Finals in Miami, Florida. — AFP

property, where workers were building an artificial lake and beach. Authorities cordoned off the site and ordered all activity to cease, but Brazilian media reported that Neymar threw a party there and bathed in the lake.

Neymar's press office in Brazil did not respond to an AFP request for comment. Neymar, 31, is currently recovering from surgery on his right ankle, which he underwent in Doha in March. The striker has not played since February and doubts have arisen about his staying at PSG. Neymar bought the Mangaratiba mansion in 2016. According to Brazilian media, it sits on 10,000 square meters (107,000 square feet) of land and features a heliport, spa and gym. — AFP

PGA officials, but not LIV, to testify before US lawmakers

WASHINGTON: US PGA Tour officials Jimmy Dunne and Ron Price will speak before a US Senate hearing into the PGA merger deal with Saudi backers of LIV Golf, lawmakers said on Monday. US Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations chairman Richard Blumenthal, a Democrat from Connecticut, and Republican ranking member Ron Johnson announced the details in a joint statement. Testimony had been sought from LIV chief executive Greg Norman and Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) governor Yasir Al-Rumayyan but neither will appear at the July 11 hearing.

Price, the tour's chief operating officer, and Dunne, a PGA Tour board member, will appear instead of PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan, who announced the controversial deal with Al-Rumayyan after more than a year of ripping LIV and the Saudis to help keep PGA players from jumping to the upstart rival circuit. Monahan has stepped away from day-to-day PGA Tour duties since last month as he deals with an undisclosed medical situation, with Price handling most of those duties.

Dunne was reportedly a major negotiator of the deal that created a new for-profit entity with major Saudi PIF investment, an agreement that came as a surprise to players on both tours. The hearing will examine the planned agreement between the PGA Tour and PIF and the tour's future plans under details of an agreement that wiped out dueling lawsuits between the rival tours last month. Senators have raised anti-trust worries as well as concerns

with Saudi Arabian human rights issues as it invests in sports properties worldwide. "We appreciate the PGA Tour working with us and look forward to a robust, thoughtful exchange with both Ron Price and Jimmy Dunne on July 11, focusing on the details and background of this deal and what it means for this cherished American institution," the senators said.

Representatives for Norman and Al-Rumayyan told the subcommittee they could not testify due to schedule conflicts. "Both governor Al-Rumayyan and Norman have valuable information to share about the operations of the Public Investment Fund, the future of LIV Golf, and Saudi Arabia's plans to invest in golf and other sports," the senators said. "Consistent with our subcommittee's practice, we look forward to working with both witnesses to find a mutually agreeable date for them to appear in the very near future."

Tiger Woods says he never saw purported prepared comments for him to deliver last year at a players meeting, documents involved in a federal lawsuit. Golf Digest and Golf Channel reported on Monday that the comments aimed at Woods were part of 357 pages of emails and documents in a lawsuit filed in the 15th Judicial District in Palm Beach County, Florida. Among the exhibits were scripted Woods supposedly from the PGA Tour meant for the 15-time major winner to repeat at a players meeting at the 2022 Travelers Championship, only weeks after LIV Golf's debut event in London.

"In response to the talking points memo released this weekend, I have never seen this document until today, and I did not attend the players meeting for which it was prepared at the 2022 Travelers," Woods tweeted late on Sunday. Remarks purportedly prepared for Woods to say at the players meeting included saying PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan was "the right guy for this war, he's a fighter" and players needed to "join the fight" and "do what I did" in rejecting overtures from the Saudi backers of LIV Golf. — AFP

India win SAFF Championship

India overpower Kuwait in penalty shootout



BENGALURU: Kuwait and India players vie for the ball during the final of the SAFF Championship on July 4, 2023.

BENGALURU: India won the SAFF Championship with a 5-4 penalty shootout win against Kuwait at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Tuesday. It was Gurpreet Singh Sandhu's save in the penalty shootout that ultimately won the game for Igor Stimac's side. Kuwait captain Khaled Hajiah decided to shoot to the right of the goal. Sandhu made the correct guess and made a one-handed save on the shot.

Sandhu's save got India its ninth SAFF Championship. The game had ended 1-1 after which the hosts prevailed 5-4 in a nail-biter of a penalty shootout.

Both sides could not add to the goals they scored in the first half and the game went into extra time. Both halves were as frantic and physical as was expected considering the events of the league stage fixture between India and Kuwait. Kuwait were far more steady

in possession early on and that was reflected when they went ahead just after the first 15 minutes. India, backed by a spirited home crowd at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium, responded in style, peppering the Kuwait box with attacks before Lallianzuala Chhangte equalized for the hosts right at the 40-minute mark.

Earlier, India's Udanta Singh and Kuwait's Mohammad Abdullah had missed their chances to force

the shootout. The penalties were needed after the teams were locked in a 1-1 draw after extra-time ended - a scoreline identical to their group stage encounter. Kuwait's Shabaib Al-Khaldi opened the scoring in the match when he tapped the ball into the goal in the 13th minute. India got back into the game in the 38th minute when Lallianzuala Chhangte fired in Sahal Abdul Samad's squared ball. — Agencies

Alcaraz kicks off in style; Rybakina survives scare

LONDON: Top seed Carlos Alcaraz made a flying start to his Wimbledon campaign on Tuesday as defending women's champion Elena Rybakina recovered from a set down to reach the second round. On a soggy day at the All England Club, most of the action took place on the covered Court One and Centre Court, where the retired Roger Federer was the main attraction. Tennis's new golden boy Alcaraz raced through the first set against French veteran Jeremy Chardy in just 22 minutes before breaking twice in the second set.

Chardy, who had previously announced that Wimbledon would be the final tournament of his career, drew first blood in the third set to lead 4-2 but Alcaraz hit back strongly, sealing a 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 win with an ace. "I like to play battles and I am really happy to have played a great level, both of us, in the third set," said the superstar Spaniard. "I am really happy to get through this first round." The US Open champion is seen as one of the few credible threats to Novak Djokovic, who is targeting an eighth Wimbledon crown to equal Federer's men's record. Wimbledon's Centre Court paid tribute to the Swiss great before the start of play as he returned to the scene of his some of his greatest triumphs.

The crowd gave Federer, who retired in September, a prolonged standing ovation interspersed with cheers as he entered the royal box, which threatened to upstage the first match of the championship for Rybakina.



WIMBLEDON: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz serves the ball to France's Jeremy Chardy during their men's singles tennis match on the second day of the 2023 Wimbledon Championships.

The Kazakh third seed was caught cold in the opening set, double-faulting on her first point on the way to losing her first service game to unseeded American Shelby Rogers but she rallied strongly to win 4-6, 6-1, 6-2. "It was really tough for me today," said Rybakina. "I was pretty nervous, and I can't even hide it. The double fault said it all at the beginning of the match. I'm really pleased to get to another round."

Later on Tuesday, two-time champion Andy Murray, who plays with a metal hip, takes on fellow British player Ryan Peniston, 10 years after his career-defining first title win at Wimbledon. Despite winning two events on the second-tier Challenger Tour last month, the 36-year-old missed out on

to be after Scottish quick Chris Sole (3-33) ripped through their top order, eventually bowled out for 203 chasing down 234. "Our boys have been fantastic. Credit to the way the lads played today," said Scotland captain Richie Berrington.

"The way we came out and showed faith in the second innings and get those early wickets was fantastic," Berrington added. "It's a quick turnaround to the game against the Netherlands. We'll take a lot of confidence but it's going to be a tough game." "It's a very difficult pill to swallow," Berrington's Zimbabwe counterpart Craig Ervine acknowledged. "I thought we did well to restrict them to 230. Unfortunately that first initial spell from Sole really put us on the back foot and just made it hard for us to recover from that position."



WIMBLEDON: Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina tosses the ball to serve to US player Shelby Rogers during their women's singles tennis match on the second day of the 2023 Wimbledon Championships. — AFP photos

a seeding for Wimbledon and has not been beyond the third round of a Grand Slam since 2017. But the 40th-ranked Murray still believes he has what it takes. "I do believe I'm one of the best grass-court players in the world, and I'm physically feeling really good," he said. "I prepared well, so there's no reason why I can't have a good tournament."

Tunisia's Ons Jabeur, last year's beaten finalist, is facing Poland's Magdalena Frech. Sixth seed Jabeur, who became the first Arab woman to reach a Grand Slam women's singles final, said she wanted to learn from her run at the All England Club last year. As a result of the wet weather, 28 matches were cancelled by mid-afternoon including those featuring third seed Daniil Medvedev and 19th seed Alexander

Zverev. Women's number one Iga Swiatek sailed into the second round on Monday but seventh seed Coco Gauff was shocked by US qualifier Sofia Kenin.

Wimbledon chiefs have downplayed concerns over dampness on Centre Court despite a long delay during Djokovic's first-round match against Pedro Cachin on the opening day of the championships. Operations director Michelle Dite said there was more moisture in the grass than expected but organizers were not planning to do anything different on Tuesday. "There was nothing strange," she said. "It was a set of circumstances with the environmental control in the bowl. There is nothing that's broken. There is nothing that means we're not confident in playing today." — AFP

Scots stun Zimbabwe

HARARE: Michael Leask helped Scotland to a stunning 31-run victory over Zimbabwe on Tuesday to set up a winner-takes-all clash with the Netherlands for a place at the World Cup. Sri Lanka became the first of the top two teams in the Super Six table to have qualified for the October-November World Cup in India when they beat Zimbabwe on Sunday. The hosts could have clinched the second spot with victory over Scotland in Bulawayo, but it was not

nation most hope, however, hitting 83 off 84 balls. But Burl crucially fell to the offbreak of Leask, who also had a smart catch off his own bowling to dismiss Richard Ngarava.

The Scotsman ended with 2-33 off six overs and his team left the field knowing that a victory over the Dutch on Thursday would see them headed for India in the Autumn. For Zimbabwe it was a case of deja vu after a similar failure in 2018 qualifiers when they also needed to win only one of their last two matches to qualify for the World Cup. They lost in both games in both 2018 and 2023. "It's always nice to put those demons from 2018 behind us and had we gotten over the line today, nobody would have been asking about that but unfortunately, we didn't," said Ervine. — AFP

Leask top scored with a 34-ball 48 as Scotland racked up 234 runs for eight wickets off their allotted 50 overs. Coming in at number eight, he combined with Mark Watt (21 not out) for an invaluable eighth-wicket partnership of 46 after the Scots had been left reeling at 170-7. Three other batsmen - Matthew Cross (38), Brandon McMullen (34) and George Munsey (31) - all got into the 30s, but failed to build on their time at the crease.

Sean Williams grabbed 3-41 off his 10 overs, but failed to shine with the bat as Zimbabwe were quickly reduced to 37/4 in the run chase, under intense pressure from Sole. Wessly Madhevere hit 40 and the dangerous Sikandar Raza 34 as Zimbabwe fought back. Ryan Burl gave the host