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Audit Bureau chief resigns, blames political disputes

Al-Ghanem questions oil minister over Dorra gas field

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Head of the Audit Bureau, the state accounts watchdog, Faisal Al-Shaye on Thursday submitted his resignation to the National Assembly speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun, blaming political disputes for his decision. Shaye warned in his resignation letter, which was released to the local media, of the dangers threatening the future of the Bureau and its work, saying that his resignation was caused by political disputes.

A number of lawmakers in the new National Assembly have called on Shaye to step down and at least

one MP has submitted a letter to the Assembly calling on the Assembly to vote for sacking Shaye. "I should ring the alarm bell" said Shaye in the letter, adding that the country has witnessed political conflicts inside and outside the National Assembly and "the last few months have seen serious twists against the Audit Bureau, deliberately targeting the post of its president".

A former MP, Shaye was appointed to the post by the National Assembly in 2019. The Audit Bureau reviews key projects and financial issues and reports to the National Assembly which sometimes asks the Bureau to carry out probes on certain issues. Shaye also accused some MPs and parliamentary commit-

tees of attempting to interfere in the functioning of the Audit Bureau, using incomplete information to show as if the Bureau was committing violations.

He also added that some debates in the National Assembly targeted the president of the Bureau and became political debates when they should have been purely technical. Shaye said that the National Assembly should keep the Audit Bureau away from political disputes to preserve its independence and neutrality.

In the meantime, MP Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday sent questions to Oil Minister Saad Al-Barrak over the Dorra gas field, shared by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and also claimed by Iran. Ghanem said that

Kuwait's Al-Jarida newspaper published on July 3 a story quoting Iranian oil officials as saying the Islamic Republic planned to carry out the development of the field unilaterally.

Ghanem asked the minister if the story was true and requested to know the latest developments in the talks between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia on one hand and Iran about sharing the field. He also asked about the role of the oil minister toward the issue. Kuwait has categorically rejected Iranian statements on the Dorra field, reiterating that it is fully owned by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and re-invited Tehran for talks to demarcate the maritime borders with Iran.

Kuwait emissions 'lowest globally'



Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Oil Minister Dr Saad Al-Barrak with the delegation of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation. — KUNA

VIENNA: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) CEO Sheikh Nawaf Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah said that carbon dioxide emissions associated with the extraction and production of Kuwaiti oil are the lowest globally. Sheikh Nawaf said in a joint statement to KUNA and Kuwait TV, during his participation in the international symposium on energy, organized by OPEC, that this is evidence of the quality of Kuwaiti oil and the accuracy of the operations of KPC and its subsidiaries.

He pointed out the importance of KPC's attendance of the OPEC International Seminar, to outline KPC's expertise in regards to these distinguished capabilities in oil extraction. Kuwaiti oil is one of the foundations of global oil in worldwide energy transformation, he underlined. He also stated that Kuwait would play a significant role amidst its Gulf oil-producing peers in the global energy transition over the coming decades, in securing clean energy for international markets.

KPC has already started implementing its plan to reach carbon neutrality, which is expected to be completed by 2050, and Kuwait is committed to the goal under United Nations guidance, he added. This falls within a well-thought-out plan currently being implemented by the Gulf country, he clarified.

In another development, the Emirati oil executive chairing this year's UN climate summit, Sultan Al-Jaber, told private and national oil and gas companies on Thursday they must slash their planet-warming emissions.

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Kuwait gripped by intense heat

KUWAIT: The meteorology department said on Thursday that the weekend would witness intense heat particularly during the day amid the seasonal Indian wave coupled with very hot winds. Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, the weather monitor, said in remarks to KUNA that the temperature would soar above 46 degrees Celsius. The lowest forecast heat at night would be at 31-33 degrees. On Friday, the weather will be very hot and humid in coastal regions with the forecast temperature is at 47-49 degrees maximum and 31-33 degrees minimum. On Saturday, the intense heat wave will persist, with the highest level at 47-49 degrees and the lowest at 32-33 degrees.

The impact of Kuwait's heat on people's psyches and behaviors was discussed by the Kuwait Times with senior specialist psychiatrist Najat Al-Saidi and internationally certified coach Zahraa Abdulsalam. People's actions can be significantly affected by high temperatures. Extreme heat events become more frequent and intense as global warming progresses, posing numerous problems for people and societies, particularly in a nation like Kuwait, where summertime temperature can exceed 45 degrees Celsius.

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Final Ariane 5 blasts off amid rocket crisis

PARIS: Europe's workhorse Ariane 5 rocket blasted off for a final time on Wednesday, with its farewell flight after 27 years of launches coming at a difficult time for European space efforts. Faced with soaring global competition, the continent has unexpectedly found itself without a way to independently launch heavy missions into space due to delays to the next-generation Ariane 6 and Russia withdrawing its rockets.

The 117th and final flight of the Ariane 5 rocket took place around 2200 GMT on Wednesday from

Millions sign up to Twitter rival Threads

WASHINGTON: More than 30 million people have downloaded Threads, Meta's rival to Twitter, within the first few hours of its launch, the company's CEO Mark Zuckerberg said Thursday. The app went live on Apple and Android app stores in 100 countries at 2300 GMT on Wednesday, and will run with no ads for now, but its release in Europe has been delayed over data privacy concerns.

Threads is the biggest challenger yet to Elon Musk-owned Twitter, which has seen a series of potential competitors emerge but not yet replace one of the world's biggest social media platforms, despite



KUWAIT: Swimmers throw one another into the water off the beach in Salmiya district, some 20 kilometers east of the capital Kuwait City in this file photo. Temperatures regularly soar in Kuwait in the summer to over 50 degrees Celsius. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. The launch had been postponed twice. It was originally scheduled on June 16, but was called off because of problems with pyrotechnical lines in the rocket's booster, which have since been replaced. Then Tuesday's launch was delayed by bad weather. The Wednesday night flight went off without a hitch, watched by hundreds of spectators, including former French Justice Minister Christiane Taubira, and was greeted with applause.

Marie-Anne Clair, the director of the Guiana Space Centre, told AFP that the final flight of Ariane 5 was "charged with emotion" for the teams in Kourou, where the rocket's launches have punctuated life for nearly three decades.

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KOUROU: The European Ariane 5 heavy rocket lifts off from the Guyanese Space Center in Kourou, French Guiana. — AFP

its struggles. "Feels like the beginning of something special, but we've got a lot of work ahead to build the app," Zuckerberg wrote on his official Threads account Thursday.

Accounts were already active for celebrities such as Jennifer Lopez, Shakira and Hugh Jackman, as well as media outlets including The Washington Post and The Economist. Zuckerberg also offered a shot across the bow at Musk - the pair are known to be bitter rivals, and have offered to wrestle it out in a cage fight. In his first tweet in over a decade, Zuckerberg posted a Spiderman pointing at Spiderman meme in an apparent reference to the similarities between Threads and Twitter.

On Threads, he wrote: "It'll take some time, but I think there should be a public conversations app"

Continued on Page 6



WASHINGTON: The Twitter logo is reflected near the logo of Threads, an Instagram app. Facebook owner Meta's new Threads app, meant to compete with Twitter, was available for pre-order on mobile app stores on iPhone and Android operating systems on July 5, 2023. — AFP



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Local

Inability to address Palestinian issue biggest failure in UN history: Diplomat

Kuwait calls for protecting children in armed conflicts, addressing Rohingya crisis

NEW YORK/GENEVA: The State of Kuwait affirmed that the inability of the international community to address the Palestinian issue remains the biggest failure in the history of the United Nations in general and the Security Council in particular. This came during the State of Kuwait's statement delivered by First Secretary Fahad Muhammad Hajji at the Security Council's open debate on "Children and Armed Conflict". "We are discussing today the annual report issued by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on children and armed conflict, with such regrettable and alarming information and figures". "While we are calling for the protection of civilians and children in armed conflicts, the report revealed a completely different realistic picture of what we call for," he noted.

"The report revealed cases of children's exploitation in wars and armed conflicts, and their exposure to kidnapping, rape, displacement and starvation, which destroy their innocence and rights to live in dignity", Hajji added. "Talking about children in armed conflict forces us again and again to address the suffering of the Palestinian people and their children, as the State of Kuwait renews its condemnation, in the strongest terms, of the (Zionist) occupation authorities' violations in this regard". He also

called for working to end conflicts, establish sustainable peace, implement Security Council resolutions, support UN efforts to protect children, and provide them with basic services and relief and humanitarian aid without obstacles or discrimination. He affirmed the desire of the State of Kuwait to strengthen joint international efforts to address serious violations against children in armed conflicts in all their forms, provide them with effective protection, guarantee their legitimate rights, prevent further crimes against them, and hold the parties responsible for the breaches against them accountable.

Fair solution to Rohingya crisis

In other developments, the State of Kuwait Thursday called on Thomas Andrews, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, to review the practical steps he made to address the causes of Muslims' crisis, Rohingya, to reach a fair and sustainable solution. This came in Kuwait's speech delivered by Diplomatic Attache Rashed Al-Abhouh before the UN Human Rights Council, as part of the interactive dialogue on situation in Myanmar. The State of Kuwait welcomes the initiative of relocating those vulnerable refugees in Bangladesh, as a good step to face the forcible unprecedented



NEW YORK: First Secretary Fahad Muhammad Hajji condemns Zionist occupation's infringement on children's rights in a speech he gave at a Security Council meeting. — KUNA photos



GENEVA: Diplomatic Attache Rashed Al-Abhouh speaks before the UN Human Rights Council.

displacement of large numbers all over the world due to war and oppression, Abhouh said. In this regard, Kuwait commended efforts and endeavors of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Bangladesh's government and the US to facilitate dealing with those refugees, he said. Abhouh further extolled efforts of Andrews aiming to high-

light situation of human rights 'violations' in that country. Meanwhile, Abhouh praised the positive outcomes of Andrews' visit to Kuwait last month, stating that it came in line with Kuwait's desire to contribute to enhancing and protecting human rights through its support to the UN Human Rights Council. — KUNA



WEST BANK: Volunteers with the International Islamic Charity Organization give out donated sacrifice meat to a woman in Palestine. — KUNA photos



Children smile as donated sacrifice meat sits on a table in front of them.

Kuwaiti charity gives 11,000 sacrifices to people in 25 countries

KUWAIT: The International Islamic Charity Organization announced on Thursday the distribution of 11,000 sacrifices to 440,000 beneficiaries in 25 countries in cooperation with 53 charities and seven volunteer teams, during the days of Eid Al-Adha.

"Sacrifice meat contributed to enhancing food security for the children of poor families during the days of Eid," stressing its endeavor to strengthen the bonds of solidarity and love between the people of Kuwait and Muslims in the world.

"Through field reports received from her field

partners, we monitored the success of the project in enhancing food security for children of poor families in the poorest countries, areas of displacement, countries of asylum, orphans and their mothers, widows, the disabled and those injured by disasters," organization said.

The Qurbani project is implemented every year with the support of benefactors, it added. The organization is an Islamic ritual through which Muslims seek to get closer to Allah, expand on the poor and needy, as well as to revive the Prophet's (PBUH) Sunnah.

The organization confirmed that its volunteer teams were active in the Qurbani project this year, helping needy groups in Kuwait, Uganda, Somalia, Yemen and Lebanon. "This year we sacrificed, on behalf of 2,253 donors, in 19 countries through the proceeds of their endowments for this project. The value of the Qurbani endowment starts from KD 30, or about \$1,000, and is an important contributor to

the sustainability of resources in these countries and the continuous practice of this Islamic ritual," the organization explained.

It pointed out that the countries in which this ritual was carried out are Kuwait, Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Morocco, Tunisia, Iraq, Mauritania, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Niger, Benin, Nigeria, Uganda, Albania, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Indonesia, Burkina Faso and Turkey.

"The sacrificial meat was distributed through the external offices of the organization in cooperation with partners and humanitarian actors approved in the list of humanitarian aid at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the neediest areas," they clarified.

The organization had launched the Qurbani campaign at its headquarters and revenue centers in the governorates and provided the public with a wide choice of Qurbani prices to contribute to the project. — KUNA

Kuwait urges Saudi Arabia to grant illegal residents umrah permits

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, represented by the hajj department, has held talks with the Saudi Ministry of Hajj to enable stateless residents to perform umrah, the ministry announced Thursday. The ministry is waiting for a response from the Saudi authorities, including any requirements the Kingdom might stipulate for approving its request.

The Ministry also said it will launch next month its early preparations for the upcoming season of

the blessed month of Ramadan and the hajj season. According to the ministry, volunteer teams and ministry employees will be assigned to prepare Ramadan programs across all mosques in various governorates, as well as to make arrangements for qiyam prayers and the Ramadan lessons.

As for hajj, early preparations include following up and registering hajj campaigns, opening registration, determining how Kuwait's 8,000 pilgrims will be distributed to hajj campaigns next year and announcing hajj prices early while exploring ways to ensure they remain low.

The ministry also plans to address Saudi Arabia for early approval to register 1,000 illegal residents for the pilgrimage, as opposed to the case this year where approval was granted only a few days before the start of the hajj season.



Dasman Diabetes takes part in international sleep apnea event

KUWAIT: The Dutch Sleep Apnea team invited a group from Dasman Diabetes Institute, which was founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), to attend and present their discovery of novel biomarkers of sleep apnea, which is a prevalent under-diagnosed disorder associated with the development of type-2 diabetes.

The delegation was headed by Dr Qais Al-Duwairi, the Director-General, Professor Fahd Al-Mulla, Chief Scientific Officer, and Dr Abdulmohsen Al-Terki, ENT and Sleep Apnea Consultant. The Kuwaiti team were welcomed in Arabic by HE Khadija Arib, former speaker of the house of representatives of the Netherlands. Hundreds of leading specialized companies were present.

The invitation comes following the successful visit of Professor Nicholas de Vries, who is a prominent Dutch researcher in Obstructive Sleep Apnea, to the institute. A seminar discussing several topics related to the condition was held during his visit in May, including the extent and spread of obstructive sleep apnea, its dangers and its relationship with diabetes. It also tackled the challenges faced in diagnosis, treatment and discovering vital indicators for this case and its link to obesity.



MINA: Pilgrims arrive in Mina to throw the jamarat on June 28, 2023. Kuwait is beginning early preparations for the next hajj season, including requesting early approval for 1,000 stateless residents to perform the pilgrimage. — KUNA

Hydrate to radiate: Mastering moisturization in Kuwait's arid climate

Dr Mohammad Al-Azemi

Maintaining hydrated skin is crucial in Kuwait's dry and arid climate. Dry air and harsh weather can cause discomfort, irritation, and dryness, leading to various skin problems. However, proper moisturization can help prevent these issues and improve skin health.

To moisturize effectively, it is essential to choose a moisturizer that suits your skin type. For oily skin, opt for lightweight, non-comedogenic moisturizers, while dry skin requires heavier, more emollient moisturizers. Applying moisturizer to damp skin can help lock in moisture and prevent it from evaporating. Therefore, after showering or washing your face, pat your skin dry and apply moisturizer immediately.

Using a humidifier is also an excellent way of maintaining hydrated skin. It can add moisture to the air, helping to keep your skin hydrated. Drinking plenty of water is another essential aspect of keeping your skin hydrated. Hydrating from the inside out is crucial for healthy skin. Drinking at least 8-10 glasses of water daily can help keep the skin hydrated and plump.

Hot water can strip the skin of its natural oils, leading to dryness and irritation. Therefore, it's important to avoid hot showers and baths. Opting for lukewarm water instead can help maintain skin's moisture levels. Protecting the skin from the sun is equally important. The sun's UV rays can dry out the skin and lead to premature aging. Therefore, always wear broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 and protective clothing.

Don't forget to keep your lips and hands moisturized. Use lip balm and hand cream regularly to keep them moisturized. The skin on the lips and hands is particularly thin and prone to dryness, so it's crucial to keep them hydrated.

- Dr Mohammad Al-Azemi is a dermatologist at the Department of Dermatology, Jaber Al-Ahmed Hospital

Kuwaiti astronomer helps name newly discovered planets

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Astronomer Khalid Al-Jamaan participated in the International Astronomical Union (IAU) to name planets and stars recently discovered by NASA.

Representative of Kuwait at IAU Al-Jamaan told KUNA this is the first participation of its kind for Kuwait, adding that such international scientific participations boost the country's status in the field of astronomy at the international level.

He said many countries competed according to certain standards set by IAU experts who are specialized in scientific supervision on programs and discoveries in the field of astronomy and space.

He added that IAU contribute to organizing and categorizing scientific discoveries and give them names to be placed on maps and references, pointing out that officiating was completed lately and the announcement of several stars and planets were named, which is thought that life is possible on them, and names suggested by Tunis and Bahrain were selected.

He said union representatives in all countries are preparing for next year to name another group of stars, adding the union aims at promoting scientific culture, provided the names should be inspired by the history and culture of participating countries.

IAU was established in 1919 in Paris, France. It is specialized in categorizing the discovered luminaries, approve and publish astronomical researches and studies in addition to following programs and activities in various countries around the world. — KUNA



Khalid Al-Jamaan

Local

Breaks, prioritizing tasks help boost productivity during hot summer: Expert

Heat a blow to employee morale, could affect decision-making skills

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The weather in Kuwait is becoming increasingly hot with temperatures reaching 50 degrees Celsius in the morning and dropping to 33 degrees during nighttime. The excessive heat leaves people struggling as the heat wave affects their productivity. According to research, hot weather can have an adverse effect on employee productivity levels by up to 20 percent and increase distraction by a massive 45 percent, but boosting productivity can be achievable to many by various strategies and approaches.

Bashayer Bader, an HR Specialist, affirmed that due to Kuwait's nature, it is normal for workers to be affected by the heat. In order to raise productivity, she advised workers to identify the most important and urgent tasks and tackle them

first to prioritize effectively.

She added: "Along with staying hydrated, employees must prioritize tasks and create a schedule to plan and finish urgent tasks and minimize distractions of being tired of heat. Luckily, we live in a country that provides us with luxuries such as air conditioning everywhere." Bader revealed that breaks can allow employees to lose the stress of burnout and increase productivity, whereas overload work can lead to exhaustion which means less work to be done.

She suggested that workers organize their tasks accordingly with the weather forecast, explaining that difficult tasks can be done on days with fair temperature while the easy and small ones can be done on sweltering days.

Bader said: "My company always provides workers with a suitable environment. A happy employee means success-

ful business and workplace efficiency. These measures can help create a more comfortable work environment and support employee well-being, leading to improved productivity." She explained "At the end, a significant drop in productivity will have a significant impact on the business." She said weather nowadays is proof that action must be taken right away to halt global warming.

Studies show that heat can have a significant impact on productivity in terms of performance and behavior of the worker. It can cause discomfort and affect the employee's decision-making skills and problem-solving abilities. It can also lead to decreased energy levels, increased errors and accidents, decreased work capacity, eventually contributing to higher absenteeism rates and negatively impacting employee morale and motivation.



Cabinet urges National Assembly to pass new traffic law: Sources

KUWAIT: Vehicles carrying non-Kuwaiti license plates will not be allowed to leave Kuwait unless their owners pay any pending traffic fines, the Interior Ministry announced on Thursday. Fines can be paid at border checkpoints starting from July 6, 2023, said the ministry in a statement.

The announcement comes amid reports that the government has asked members of the National Assembly to expedite the approval of amendments to the traffic law to curb road accidents and protect the public from the injuries, deaths and losses they cause.

The current traffic violations law, the government reportedly said, is not sufficient to address current needs as it has been approved for decades.

The government indicated that road conditions have now changed as the number of cars is increasing and a new traffic law must be approved, in order to "reduce accidents and deaths, through the stiffening of traffic violations."

The new traffic law, including extensive amendments to the law currently in force, was referred to previous national assemblies over the past few years, but it was not possible to discuss it due to dissolution or annulment of previous parliamentary sessions.

The new amendments to the law currently referred to the National Assembly include increasing traffic penalties, such as setting the fine for exceeding the speed limit at no more than KD 500 and no less than KD 200 and raising some viola-



KUWAIT: A vital road in Kuwait comes to a standstill during rush hour in this file photo. Kuwait's government is calling on parliament to pass a traffic draft law, which is expected to increase traffic violation fines by up to 1,000 percent. — KUNA

tions by up to 1,000 percent.

Some of the most prominent fines in the draft law include fining people KD 500 for any of the following: passing a red light, using their phone, driving recklessly and speeding. Fines could go up to KD 200 for seating children in the front seat, tinted windows and making loud noises. They could reach KD 200 for placing stickers, driving without insur-

ance and failing to adhere to road markings.

Anyone driving or parking their vehicle on the sidewalk or those not wearing a seat belt could pay up to KD 150. The amendments also stipulate a fine of KD 75 for parking trucks and vehicles and selling goods in residential areas or public facilities as well as KD 75 for deliberately disrupting or obstructing traffic.

Alliance with Kuwait pivotal for security of Gulf: Italian official

ROME: Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani has affirmed significance of the strategic partnership with the State of Kuwait for it "plays a credible role" in ensuring security and stability of the Gulf and the Middle East. Minister Tajani was speaking in an exclusive interview with KUNA on heels of his meeting with the visiting Kuwaiti Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

On the six-decade diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Rome, Tajani said Kuwait is a strategic partner for Italy in the Middle East, indicating that one of the memoranda of understanding, inked during the current visit by the Kuwaiti foreign minister, aimed at holding deep and strategic dialogue between the two countries. Tajani has affirmed that Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber's visit to Italy aimed at boosting the bilateral relations at the political, economic, commercial, environmental, scientific and cultural levels. "We also desire to broaden teaching the Italian language and cultural activities" in Kuwait, Tajani said, expressing readiness to host gifted Kuwaiti graduates at Italian universities.

On the Ukraine issue, Tajani said, "the Russian aggression (on Ukraine) constitutes a threat to the world stability and the international community must stand united for halting it and it is important the Arab nation act robustly for achieving just peace as soon as possible." "We hope that Kuwait that has taken a constructive stand at the United Nations toward this cause, along with other Gulf States, send a clear message of peace to Moscow to nudge President (Vladimir) Putin to stop the military operations and sit at the negotiating table," Tajani added.

"Italy in general views the Gulf region with renewed interest and is aware that it can count on friendship of the key players such as Kuwait, for we are confident that your country can play a crucial role for ensuring the greatest possible stability and security in the region," the Italian deputy prime minister and foreign minister said.

On the mutual cooperation, Tajani said there are enormous potentials for building a solid economic partnership between Italy and Kuwait, noting that trade exchanges between the two countries grew in 2022, by more than 53 percent. Moreover, Italy is the number-one exporting country to Kuwait, he added. Noting that a number of Italian companies have been operating in several key sectors in Kuwait, he affirmed that Kuwait 2035 development strategy provides more opportunities for the Italian investors. — KUNA



Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani.

Over 6,000 units ready to get electricity in Mutlaa

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare revealed that the total number of housing units ready to get electricity connected in the residential city of Mutlaa currently amounts to 5,361 housing units. The number will reach 6,860, in addition to a number of public buildings in six suburbs, next week.

Housing affairs indicated that it is coordinating with the Ministry of Electricity and Water to examine the work needed to connect electricity to 1,499 housing units in two suburbs, while the delivery of current to 3,265 housing units in three suburbs has been completed.

The connection of electricity to all residential plots in the suburbs located between N6 to N11 will be completed before the end of next August ahead of schedule, the authority said. The work was previously scheduled to be done in December 2023.

"District N8 has become the first residential suburb to get power connections completed, where all citizens living in it can apply for the delivery of electricity to their housing plots," the authority said.

District N11 will get power before the end of July.

Housing affairs indicated that it will receive applications for issuing a certificate of electricity connection for residential plots announced through the Sahel program, starting next Sunday.

On Wednesday, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy (MEW) announced the operating of four main power plants to supply



KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Housing Welfare says electrical wiring for some units will be completed ahead of schedule. — KUNA

electricity to 3,265 plots of land in some parts of Al-Mutlaa, in coordination with the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. In a news statement, the ministry said that it is ready to receive applications of the owners of the plots of land who want to get electricity. The statement referred to keen-

ness of Minister Dr Jassem Al-Ostad on providing the plots of land with electricity, calling on the others to complete their applicants via the ministry's website to get electricity. Delivering electricity to these plots will be done in three phases, the statement said. — Agencies



KUWAIT: The inspection team is seen in front of the Kuwait Municipality branch in Firdous. — KUNA

Kuwait Municipality raids 10 bachelors' buildings in Firdous

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality announced Wednesday that it has found more than 10 houses in Al-Firdous area within Farwaniya Governorate being used for bachelors' housing.

The head of the Kuwait Municipality team Abdullah Al-Mutairi said the power supply was cut off from the violating properties.

This campaign began last June and will continue for the next five months, with the purpose of visiting houses on the municipality's radar. Mutairi said the municipality will utilize its

connection to the Ministries of Justice and Interior to inspect the properties in question.

He added that it "handles new related complaints within the internal residential areas and then forms joint work teams to inspect the properties."

"The joint committee today carried out procedures for cutting off the power supply and removing violations, as well as editing reports of violations," he said, explaining that the procedures of the municipal agencies and participating authorities are decisive and serious to reduce negative phenomena of bachelors' living in private residential areas.

Mutairi called on the owners of violating properties to be responsible and to maintain the safety of people living in these dwellings as there are many building violations found in bachelors' housing. — KUNA

News in Brief

Kuwaiti doctor receives
award for work in US

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Cardiologist Dr Fawaz Al-Enezi was chosen as the best professor in Cardiology and Vascular Diseases at Duke University, which is ranked fifth in the United States in internal medicine. Enezi earned this prestigious recognition for his exceptional expertise in cardiac examination and his contributions to medical research, including the use of Xenon MRI, a non-invasive diagnostic tool, to screen for cardiopulmonary diseases such as pulmonary hypertension, which lacks specific symptoms resulting in a delay of clinical suspicion.



Dr Fawaz Al-Enezi

Amghara warehouse fire
extinguished; no injuries reported

KUWAIT: Fire crews put out a fire that broke out in a warehouse in the Amghara region. The warehouse, which contained sponge and wood, caught fire Thursday morning, according to the Public Relations and Information Department of the Kuwait Fire Force. The fire was extinguished after the Central Operations Department directed four fire brigades to the location of the incident. No injuries were reported.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A man shops for groceries as carved fruits adorn a store in Kuwait City on July 5, 2023. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Youngsters share how pop culture
shapes their thoughts, behaviors

Consumption fosters positive ideologies for some but could fester negative mannerisms

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Pop culture undeniably holds a powerful influence over youngsters' lives by occupying a major part of their ideologies and beliefs. This makes it crucial for youngsters to be aware of its influence on their mindset and behavior. Accordingly, young people must question and engage with pop culture in a responsible and wise manner.

By understanding both the positive and negative aspects of pop culture, youngsters can become capable of taking wise decisions, embrace healthy beliefs that develop a healthy ideology and contribute positively to society as a whole. To shed light on the impact of pop culture on youngsters, Kuwait Times interviewed two youngsters with opposing opinions.

Esra'a, a dentist in her early twenties, who is also a volunteer for the Kuwait Red Crescent Society, told Kuwait Times: "I am a big fan of anime movies. Ever since I was a little girl, I used to watch cartoons that impacted the way I view and think about things. I

only realized that pop culture has shaped the way my mind works after I grew up. I feel more compassionate and understanding of people's emotions because the anime series I watch highlight many human issues that I may have not experienced before."

According to Esra'a, pop culture has the ability to entertain and inspire through delivering positive messages that can encourage social intelligence, empathy and humanity. "Social media encouraged me to take part in humanitarian actions and join humanitarian organizations, especially after the disaster that happened in Turkey and Syria, where an earthquake hit the countries and caused death and injury to innocents. I saw the effective role humanitarian organizations played through helping the victims and how important it was for the victims," she said.

Social media displayed an effective example of humanity being a core element that connects people all around the globe, which enlightened Esra'a and encouraged her to take part in supporting others.

Unlike Esra'a, Abdullah, a university student,

shared a differing perspective with Kuwait Times. "There are many worrying aspects of pop culture. For example, social media platforms are becoming full of advertisements. There is a lot of pressure on individuals to buy things or follow the latest trends that are cultivated among users, otherwise people will not feel fulfilled," he said. Abdullah sees the constant appearance of advertisements on social media platforms creates a negative rather than a positive influence on youngsters, as it impacts their consumption patterns and may redirect their purpose of using social media from searching for something useful to seeking fulfillment through materialism.

Abdullah also mentioned the role of people who tend to flaunt their life to the public. "Influencers often portray an image of an unrealistically perfect life from all aspects. They show they are capable of traveling anytime, buying the most expensive vehicles, wearing high-end clothes and managing their lives seamlessly, which makes others view their lives as poor, difficult and incompetent," he said.

KU to enroll students
who withdrew from
programs abroad

KUWAIT: The Council of Public Universities approved a decision to allow Kuwaiti students who withdrew from the government's foreign-university scholarship program to apply for study at Kuwait University.

"This decision is in the interest of students who faced some problems and obstacles to completing their educational career, and for Kuwait University to be an incubator for them as well as to ensure that they receive a distinguished education that serves their country and helps in the development process of the country after their graduation," said Acting Dean of Ad-



Rawa Al-Jarallah



mission and Registration at Kuwait University Dr Rawa Al-Jarallah.

Students applying for the first time to Kuwait University must have graduated from high school in the academic years of 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 and not enrolled in another university. The new decision will enable those who withdrew from a university program abroad to enroll in the university, provided that the withdrawal period does not exceed one year.

Forum to explore
knowledge economy's
potential, obstacles

KUWAIT: Al-Saad Foundation for Knowledge and Scientific Research (Mabarrat Al-Saad) announced the launch of the Knowledge Economy Forum on Sunday under the slogan "Knowledge wealth is the basis of economic development".

The forum, which kicks off Sunday, July 9, aims to invest creative human capabilities to build a knowledge-based economy with the participation of specialists from Kuwait, the Gulf and the Arab world.

The knowledge economy is an economic system based on intellectual capital. In particular, it refers to the ability to capitalize on scientific discoveries and applied research and commercialize academic scholarship. The knowledge economy represents a large share of the activity in most highly developed economies. In a knowledge economy, a significant component of value may consist of intangible assets such as the value of its workers' knowledge or intellectual property.

Sheikha Nabila Salman Al-Humood Al-Sabah, President of the Forum and President of the Fadia Al-Saad Scientific Competition, said the two-day

forum, which is sponsored by the President of the foundation Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, aims to spread the culture of a knowledge-based economy, identify what is needed to build such an economy and explore potential obstacles that stand in the way of making such a transition.

Sheikha Nabila stressed the keenness of Mabarrat Al-Saad to highlight digitization as one of the pillars of a knowledge-based economy.

She added that the forum will focus on the concept of human capital as a crucial component of knowledge economies. The importance of the forum, she said, stems from the inclusion of knowledge economy elements in the development plans of most Arab countries.

Everyone can benefit from the forum, said Sheikha Nabila, including inventors, teachers, academics, students, parents and researchers. An exhibition is held alongside the forum, which includes pavilions of companies and institutions working in the field of knowledge economy and public benefit associations. — KUNA

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Rise of the humanoid robots

UN tries to tackle 'mind-blowing' growth of AI



BORDEAUX: Photo shows robots competing in the 'Ligue de Standard Platform robot' during the 26th edition of the "RoboCup23" international robotics tournament organized by the University of Bordeaux, in Bordeaux, southwestern France. — AFP

GENEVA: The mind-blowing growth of artificial intelligence poses many questions that have no answers yet, the United Nations admitted Thursday at its AI summit, attended by some exceptionally life-like humanoid robots. The UN is aware that AI technology is racing ahead of the capacity to set its boundaries and directions, and so it brought together some of the best minds on the topic—whether human or man-made.

The "AI for Good Global Summit", in Geneva on Thursday and Friday is being convened by the UN's ITU tech agen-

cy—and many unaware attendees were startled by the humanoid robots suddenly turning to look at them as they passed by.

"When generative AI shocked the world just a few months ago, we had never seen anything like it. Nothing even close to it. Even the biggest names in tech found the experience mind-blowing," ITU chief Doreen Bogdan-Martin told the summit. "And just like that, the possibility that this form of intelligence could get smarter than us got so much closer than we ever thought—including those behind the technology."

No answers

The summit is bringing together around 3,000 experts from companies like Microsoft and Amazon as well as from universities and international organizations to try to sculpt frameworks for ensuring AI is used for positive purposes. Bogdan-Martin painted an alternative nightmare scenario in which AI puts millions of jobs at risk, disinformation spreads widely, and unchecked AI advances lead to "social unrest, geopolitical instability and economic disparity on a scale we've never seen before".

"Many of our questions that we have on AI have no answers yet. Should we hit pause on giant AI experiments? Will we control AI more than it controls us? And will AI help humanity, or destroy it?" she asked. The robots gathered in Geneva came in many forms: dogs, farm machinery, but also exceptionally realistic avatars, singers, artists and nursing home workers. With cameras inside their eyes, many were actively following what was going on around them: tracking movement, answering questions, smiling, frowning and even eye-rolling.

The Jam Galaxy Band features humanoid robot Desdemona—Desi to her friends—on lead vocals. Created by roboticist David Hanson, she throws out jazzy lyrics on all sorts of subjects—love, credit cards, meetings in gardens—and the band interacts and goes with it. "It's pretty amazing. You would think it's weird but it's really cool because her AI-generated lyrics are really out there," said soprano saxophone player Dianne Krouse. "I'm just improvising around that and doing interpretive saxophoning to what she's singing." — AFP

Yellen in China as US seeks to stabilise ties

BEIJING: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen arrived in Beijing on Thursday, kicking off a visit aimed at improving communication and stabilising the tense relationship between the world's two largest economies. Yellen's trip through Sunday is her first to China as treasury secretary, and comes just weeks after Secretary of State Antony Blinken paid a rare visit to the country.

She arrived in Beijing, and was greeted on the tarmac by US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns, as well as Chinese finance ministry official Yang Yingming. The visit will see Yellen seek to expand lines of correspondence, avoid miscommunications and widen collaboration on the global economy, climate change, debt distress and other issues, according to a Treasury official.

Her trip—which comes in the face of concerns over China's economic recovery and US interest rate hikes—may also give officials on both sides a chance to speak about their countries' growth outlooks. On Friday, Yellen is scheduled to meet with Premier Li Qiang at the Great Hall of the People, speak with former vice premier Liu He, and attend a dinner hosted by former Chinese central bank governor Zhou Xiaochuan, a senior Treasury official told reporters on Thursday.

With Liu, her former counterpart, Yellen is expected to exchange views about the status of the two sides' economies, as well as the global outlook, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Analysts are also watching closely for a potential meeting with Liu's successor as vice premier, He Lifeng.

"The fact that she's spending four days in Beijing, given all of her other domestic and international pressures, underscores the importance she is attaching to this visit," Asia Society Policy Institute vice-president Wendy Cutler told AFP. And while each side will have a long list of complaints to raise with the other with little flexibility to adjust

their policies, the visit could allow Yellen to lay the groundwork for future collaboration, Cutler added.

Reframing relations

Yellen's trip continues an effort by the United States to reframe US-China ties diplomatically and in other areas, said Lindsay Gorman, senior fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. "It's about managing the new realm of strategic competition," she said, noting that Yellen has pointed to competition only so far as it implicates security and values such as human rights.

With technology export controls and competitive measures "dominating the economic policy agenda now, I think there's a real role to explain and communicate what the purpose of these measures really is", she said.

Underscoring the challenges Yellen will face, The Wall Street Journal reported that the US administration is mulling restricting Chinese companies' access to US cloud-computing services provided by companies such as Amazon and Microsoft. Ahead of the trip, Beijing appears to have adopted reciprocal actions such as new export controls on metals key to semiconductor manufacturing, further proof that a shift in relations could take time.

But Yellen may be best positioned to build bridges with China on shared global challenges, Gorman said. There are areas, such as debt distress, where cooperation appears more likely. The United States has welcomed progress in the case of Zambia—whose creditors including China agreed to restructure its public debt—along with similar steps in Sri Lanka.

Washington has been pushing bilateral creditors for quicker debt treatments, while previously accusing China of delays. Looking ahead, President Joe Biden has voiced confidence that he will meet China's top leader Xi Jinping again soon.

'De-risking'

However, tensions remain over a host of economic issues, including possible plans by Biden's administration to restrict certain outbound investments involving sensitive technology that could impact China. Washington also has concerns over Beijing's "coercive actions and non-market economic practices", and plans to



BEIJING: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen (R) shakes hands with US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns (L) as Yang Yingming, Director General of the Department of International Economic Relations of China's Ministry of Finance, looks on after Yellen arrived at Beijing Capital International Airport in Beijing on July 6, 2023. — AFP

push for corrective actions, an official said.

Although top American officials have stressed that Washington is not looking to decouple from China—and instead is pushing to "de-risk"—it remains unclear if Beijing will be convinced of a shift in US policy.

Other issues to be discussed could include recent amendments to China's anti-espionage law, which broadened the definition of spying and banned the transfer of information relating to national security. Yellen will meet on Friday with US businesses operating in China, for whom the amendments have brought fresh uncertainties.

These have added to existing concerns such as intellectual property protection and China's subsidies, which Washington says has distorted trade in certain industries. During the meeting with businesses, hosted by AmCham China, Yellen is due to hear about the opportunities and challenges firms face operating in China, a senior Treasury official said. — AFP

Death toll rises to 29 in Mexico bus plunge

OAXACA: At least 29 people were killed in Mexico when a passenger bus careened off a mountain road and plummeted into a ravine Wednesday in the southern state of Oaxaca, the state prosecutor told AFP. "The figures we have 12 hours after the rescue work began are 29 people dead and 19 injured," Bernardo Rodriguez Alamilla said by telephone.

Images from the scene showed the mangled wreckage of the vehicle lying on its side at the bottom of a steep cliff as rescuers worked nearby. Fifteen women died, two of them while receiving hospital care, as well as 13 men and a child, the prosecutor said. The first official report set the number of fatalities at 27 and the number of wounded at 17.

An investigation has been launched into the cause of the accident, with early indications suggesting mechanical failure. At least six of the injured were unconscious and in serious condition when they were rushed to hospital, according to the civil protection agency.

The bus, operated by a local transport company, had left the capital Mexico City on Tuesday night and was heading for the town of Santiago de Yosondua, authorities said. "The driver of the vehicle presumably lost control... and unfortunately it fell into a ravine more than 25 meters (80 feet) deep," a state official, Jesus Romero, told a press conference.

The company operating the bus provides a daily service from Mexico City, he said. Injured passengers were transferred to area hospitals, while emergency services retrieved the bodies of those killed, Romero added.

The accident happened in Magdalena Penasco, a town located in a mountainous area home to remote communities, winding roads and steep ravines. "We deeply regret the accident that occurred in Magdalena Penasco," Oaxaca state governor Salomon Jara wrote on social media, offering condolences to the families of the deceased. — AFP

International

Zionist entity strikes south Lebanon after mortar launched

'More than 15 artillery shells' hit around the communities of Kfar Chouba and Halta

JERUSALEM: The Zionist army said Thursday it was conducting strikes on southern Lebanon after a mortar launched from its northern neighbor exploded in the border area between the two foes.

The latest military action comes three months after the two countries saw their worst cross-border fire in years. It also comes amid rising tension between Zionist entity and Arab countries after Zionist entity carried out its biggest military operation in years in the occupied West Bank targeting the Jenin refugee camp, a Palestinian militant stronghold.

"A launch was carried out from Lebanese territory which exploded adjacent to the border in Zionist territory," an Zionist army statement said.

An army spokesman said the projectile was a mortar, after an army statement earlier reported the explosion had hit near the border town of Ghajar.

"In response, the IDF (Zionist military) is currently striking the area from which the launch was carried out in Lebanese territory," an army spokesman told AFP. Lebanon's official National News Agency said Zionist entity had fired "more than 15 artillery shells" which hit around the communities of Kfar Chouba and Halta.

The two countries are still technically at war, and peacekeepers from the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) patrol the border between them. Earlier on Thursday, Lebanon's armed Hezbollah movement denounced Zionist entity for building a concrete wall around Ghajar, a small town that straddles their common border.

The Iran-backed Shiite group called on the Lebanese state to take action to "prevent the consolida-

tion of this occupation" by Zionist entity of Ghajar, home to around 3,000 people.

Hezbollah denounced Zionist entity for the erection of "a barbed wire fence and the construction of a concrete wall around the entire locality".

Rockets and drones

Thursday's cross-border fire follows Zionist entity bombarding Lebanon in April, in response to a barrage of rockets fired from the country. The April incident was the heaviest rocket fire from Lebanon since Zionist entity fought a war with Hezbollah in 2006.

UNIFIL, which was established in 1978, was beefed up in response to that 34-day conflict. Last month, Hezbollah said it shot down an Zionist drone that had flown into Lebanon's southern airspace.

Zionist warplanes and drones regularly violate Lebanon's airspace, while the powerful Shiite Muslim movement for years has been sending drones towards Zionist entity.

Weeks earlier Hezbollah had put on a display of military might, with mock cross-border raids into Zionist entity a few miles (kilometres) from the border. The strikes on Lebanon came a day after Zionist entity hit militant targets in the Gaza Strip, in response to rocket fire from the coastal Palestinian territory.

Projectiles were fired from Gaza as Zionist forces drew to an end a massive raid in the occupied West Bank, their largest such operation there in years. Twelve Palestinians and one Zionist soldier were killed in the two-day raid on the northern city of Jenin and its adjacent refugee camp.



KIRYAT SHMONA: Zionist soldiers stand near army self-propelled artillery vehicles on the outskirts of Kiryat Shmona near Zionist entity's border with Lebanon on July 6, 2023. — AFP

Zionist forces launched drone strikes and employed an army bulldozer to rip up streets in Jenin's refugee camp, prompting at least 3,000 residents to flee. Hundreds of troops were involved in the raid, which the army said targeted

fighters in the militant stronghold. Zionist entity has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War and has imposed a crippling blockade on Gaza since 2007, when the militant group Hamas took power. — AFP

Iran says forces tried to intercept oil tanker

TEHRAN: Iran said Thursday its forces attempted to intercept an oil tanker it alleged had been involved in a collision, after the US Navy accused its Iranian rivals of trying to seize the vessel. The US military said on Wednesday that it had blocked two attempts by the Iranian navy to seize commercial tankers in international waters off Oman, including one case in which the Iranians fired on the tanker.

The maritime services in Iran said one of the two tankers, the Bahamian-flagged Richmond Voyager, had collided with an Iranian vessel, seriously injuring five crew members, according to state news agency IRNA. They said the collision had occurred on Tuesday and that it damaged and caused the flooding of the Iranian vessel.

"The Richmond Voyager continued on its way, regardless of international maritime rules and regulations," IRNA said, adding a court order had been issued for Iran's navy to seize the tanker. The news agency said "the offending oil tanker was identified" on Wednesday and pursued by the Iranian navy but that it ignored warnings and changed course before entering Oman's territorial waters.

Iran said it had referred the matter to the "friendly" Sultanate of Oman, which has mediated talks



AT SEA, UNDEFINED: Image released by the US Department of Defense shows damage sustained by M/T Richmond Voyager after an Iranian naval vessel fired multiple rounds from, during an attempt to unlawfully seize the commercial tanker in the Gulf of Oman. — AFP

between the Islamic republic and the United States, and that it was seeking the vessel's seizure. On Tuesday, the US military said it had also foiled an Iranian attempt to seize the Marshall Islands-flagged TRF Moss three hours before the incident involving the Richmond Voyager.

In both cases, the Iranians departed after a US destroyer appeared on the scene, the US Central Command said in a statement. In April, Iran seized two tankers within a week in regional waters. — AFP

Wagner chief is still in Russia

MINSK: Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin is still in Russia, Belarus' president said Thursday, raising questions about the deal to end the mercenary leader's mutiny last month. Rescue workers meanwhile were clawing through rubble in the UNESCO-protected western Ukrainian city of Lviv, which was hit by a Russian missile early Thursday that killed four and injured dozens more.

Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko mediated a deal to end Prigozhin's revolt — the most serious challenge to Russian President Vladimir Putin's rule — that was to see the mercenary head into Belarusian exile. "As far as Prigozhin is concerned, he is in Saint Petersburg... He is not in Belarus," Lukashenko, who has ruled isolated Belarus for nearly three decades, told reporters from foreign media outlets in Minsk.

Speaking in the presidential palace, Lukashenko said he knew "for sure" that Prigozhin was a free man, adding: "I spoke to him on the phone yesterday". The Kremlin replied by saying it was "not following" Prigozhin's movements, nearly two weeks after the June 23 mutiny that saw armed fighters on the march toward Moscow.

Lukashenko said that members of Prigozhin's Wagner mercenary group have not established a base in Belarus yet, despite an offer from the Kremlin for those who took part in the failed mutiny to

do so. "At the moment the question of their transfer and set-up has not been decided," Lukashenko said.

Images broadcast by Russian media on Wednesday showed police entering Prigozhin's residence, a vast and luxurious mansion with a helicopter parked in the grounds, reportedly on June 25.

'Vicious' attack

Lukashenko's comments came hours after what Lviv's mayor said was the biggest attack on civilian infrastructure in the city since the start of the Russian invasion last February. While Russia regularly pounds Ukraine with missiles, artillery and drones, the Lviv region in the west, hundreds of kilometres from the frontlines and near the Polish border, has largely been spared the aerial onslaughts.

The US embassy in Ukraine described the attack as "vicious" and said in a tweet that "Russia's repeated attacks on civilians are absolutely horrifying." "We will not stand by and will continue to strengthen Ukraine's ability to defend itself," it added.

Interior Minister Igor Klymenko wrote on Telegram that the missiles had struck a residential building. "The 3rd and 4th floors in two sections of the house were destroyed," he said. At least four people had been killed in the attack and 32 were wounded, including a child, the emergency services said later, updating an initial toll.

The attack came as President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who vowed a tangible response to the strike, arrived for an official visit in Bulgaria, a major ammunition producer and supporter. — AFP

Kuwait gripped with intense heat...

Continued from Page 1

According to Saidi, the agony and frustration brought on by extreme heat can trigger irritation in people, increasing their propensity to participate in disputes or have violent outbursts. She stated that

"the constant rise in temperatures usually results in feelings of stress, fatigue, and unease." Making logical decisions, evaluating risks, and responding correctly to various situations may be difficult for some people. They could thereby endanger their security and wellbeing. "There is no question that the weather significantly influences how a person's moods change for the better or worse. The high temperatures, which can exceed 50 degrees, are another factor that causes strain and impulsive rage when driving, according to Abdulsalam. — Agencies

Final Ariane 5 blasts off amid rocket crisis...

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The final payload on Ariane 5 is a French military communications satellite and a German communications satellite. The satellite "marks a major turning point for our armed forces: better performance and greater resistance to jamming," French Minister of the Armed Forces Sebastien Lecornu tweeted.

Though it would become a reliable rocket, Ariane 5 had a difficult start. Its maiden flight exploded moments after liftoff in 1996. Its only other such failure came in 2002. Herve Gilbert, an engineer who was working on Ariane 5 at the time, said the 2002 explosion was a "traumatic experience" that "left a deep impression on us". But the rocket would embark on what was ultimately a long string of successful launches. The initial stumbles had "the positive effect of keeping us absolutely vigilant," Gilbert said.

Webb and Juice

Ariane 5 earned such a reputation for reliability that NASA trusted it to launch the \$10 billion James Webb Space Telescope in late 2021. The rocket's second-last launch was in April, blasting the European Space Agency's Juice spacecraft on its way to find out whether Jupiter's icy moons can host alien life. Daniel Neuenchwander, the ESA's head of human and robotic exploration, said that in commercial terms, Ariane 5 had been "the spearhead of Europe's space activities". The rocket was able to carry a far bigger load than its predecessor Ariane 4, giving Europe a competitive advantage and allowing the

continent to establish itself in the communication satellite market.

While waiting for Ariane 6, whose first launch was initially scheduled for 2020, Europe had been relying on Russia's Soyuz rockets to get heavy-load missions into space. But Russia withdrew space cooperation with Europe in response to sanctions imposed over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The number of launches from Kourou fell from 15 in 2021 to six last year. Another blow came in December, when the first commercial flight of the next-generation Vega C light launcher failed. Last week, another problem was detected in the Vega C's engine, likely pushing its return further into the future.

'Difficult times'

The launcher market has been increasingly dominated by billionaire Elon Musk's US firm SpaceX, whose rockets are now blasting off once a week. Lacking other options, the ESA was forced to turn to rival SpaceX's Falcon 9 for the successful launch of its Euclid space telescope on Saturday. The ESA will also use a SpaceX rocket to launch satellites for the EarthCARE observation mission.

It remains unclear how the agency will launch the next round of satellites for the European Union's Galileo global navigation system. At the Paris Air Show earlier this month, ESA chief Josef Aschbacher acknowledged that these were "difficult times," adding that everyone was "working intensely" to get Ariane 6 and Vega-C ready. Ariane 6 was unveiled on a launch pad in Kourou earlier this month ahead of an ignition test of its Vulcain 2.1 rocket engine. Because the new rocket requires less staffing and maintenance, 190 out of 1,600 positions are being cut at the Kourou spaceport. — AFP

Kuwait emissions 'lowest globally...

Continued from Page 1

Sultan Al-Jaber, head of the UAE national oil company ADNOC, told ministers from countries of the OPEC oil producers' grouping the industry must "urgently decarbonize its operations and take collective action to eliminate operational emissions".

Jaber, whose appointment to host the COP28 summit in Dubai in November and December was criticized by climate activists and some Western lawmakers, said the entire industry "should be aligned" to help the world meet the target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. This includes not only international oil companies but also national state-controlled ones, Jaber told an OPEC seminar in Vienna. While a number of multinational companies have stated their emissions-reduction aims, many state-held giants such as ones in the Gulf, China and

Iran have yet to set clear targets.

The "operational emissions" Jaber referred to are the upstream carbon gases released during production and account for 15-20 percent of the companies' carbon output. Also known as "scope 1 and 2" emissions, they do not include the gases released when end-users such as the transport industry or factories burn their fuel products. Jaber urged the producers also "to accelerate an industry-wide commitment to reach near zero methane emissions by 2030."

Methane is a potent greenhouse gas and escapes in large volumes from gas fields and pipelines. "If we do this, that takes care of a massive proportion of scope 1 and 2 emissions," he said. Jaber repeated his warning that energy demand will continue to rise, forcing producers to "massively scale up clean energies ... while also sustaining socio-economic development." He reiterated his support for solutions such as carbon capture — a warming-reduction method that climate advocates caution is too far from being deployed at scale to make much difference in reaching targets. — Agencies

Millions sign up to Twitter rival Threads...

Continued from Page 1

with 1 billion+ people on it." Twitter has said it has more than 200 million daily users. Threads was introduced as a clear spin-off of Instagram, which offers a built-in audience of more than two billion users, sparing the new platform the challenge of starting from scratch. Instagram chief Adam Mosseri told users that Threads was intended to build "an open and friendly platform for conversations." "The best thing you can do if you want that too is be kind," he said.

Zuckerberg is taking advantage of Musk's chaotic ownership of Twitter to push out the new product, which Meta hopes will become the go-to platform for celebrities, companies and politicians. "It's as simple as that: if an Instagram user with a large number of followers such as Kardashian or a Bieber or a Messi begins posting on Threads regularly, a new platform could quickly thrive," strategic financial analyst Brian Wieser said on Substack.

Analyst Jasmine Engberg from Insider Intelligence said Threads only needs one out of four Instagram monthly users "to make it as big as Twitter."

"Twitter users are desperate for an alternative, and Musk has given Zuckerberg an opening," she added. Under Musk, Twitter has seen content moderation reduced to a minimum with glitches and rash decisions scaring away celebrities and major advertisers. He has angered Twitter's most devoted aficionados by declaring that access to its TweetDeck product — which allows users to view a fast flow of tweets at once — would be for paying customers only.

Meta has its legion of critics too, especially in Europe, which could slow the growth of Threads. The company has been criticized for its handling of personal data, the essential ingredient for targeted ads that help it rake in billions of dollars in profits. Mosseri said he regretted that the launch was delayed in the European Union, but had Meta waited for regulatory clarity from Brussels, Threads would have been "many, many, many, months away." "I was worried that our window would close, because timing is important," he told the tech news site Platformer.

According to a source close to the matter, Meta was wary of a new law called the Digital Markets Act (DMA), which sets strict rules for the world's "gatekeeper" internet companies. One rule restricts platforms from moving user data between products, as would potentially be the case between Threads and Instagram. — AFP

International

President-toppling Sri Lanka activist girds for new revolt

‘We got rid of Gota, we have not been able to win the ‘system change’

COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan jail witnessed a rare moment of accord last year when both prisoners and guards clamoured to greet its newest inmate: The man who toppled the island nation's president. Student leader Wasantha Mudalige remains lionised by many for channelling public anger at an unprecedented economic crisis into a movement that shook the foundations of Sri Lanka's political system.

At the height of last summer's unrest, he helped spearhead a siege of government buildings in Colombo that saw once-loved premier Gotabaya Rajapaksa chased into a humiliating exile. The 29-year-old, whose cherubic face belies his history of fierce confrontations with riot police, spent months behind bars on terror charges for his efforts.

"We had a very warm welcome," Mudalige told AFP outside a court appearance in June, while recounting his arrival at jail alongside two confederates. "Even the prison guards were very supportive. They saw us as the heroes who got rid of Gota." Mudalige said his incarceration was a necessary "sacrifice" in the unfinished battle to reform Sri Lanka's political system.

Now free on bail, he said lingering economic woes have left Sri Lanka bristling with discontent, frustrated with its new president—and ready for another revolt. "Although we got rid of Gota, we have not been able to win the 'system change' that we de-



COLOMBO: File photo shows Inter University Students' Federation leader Wasantha Mudalige gestures as he leaves on bail the Colombo fort magistrates court, in Colombo on February 1, 2023. — AFP

manded," Mudalige said. "We don't think the government can go on for long," he added. "When you analyse the situation, there is no way the government can continue."

'They had no alternative'

As head of the Inter-University Students' Federation (IUSF) at the time, Mudalige stood at the fore-

front of last year's street protests. Alongside him was a broad coalition of saffron-robed Buddhist monks, minority activists and ordinary citizens outraged by government corruption and mismanagement of the island's worsening economic tailspin.

"They had no alternative but to take to the streets because they had no fuel, no food, no electricity... people were dying in petrol queues," Mudalige said. In July the IUSF and its allies laid siege to the Presidential Palace in Colombo.

Rajapaksa, once lauded by the island's Sinhalese majority for helping crush a decades-long Tamil separatist insurgency, was forced to evacuate the residence through a secret backdoor and temporarily fled the country. Protesters streamed through the compound, gapping at its opulent furnishings and frolicked in its pool in the revelry that followed.

Rajapaksa's successor, Ranil Wickremesinghe, quickly sought to restore order by directing police to arrest the movement's leaders. Mudalige was caught in the dragnet the following month when police snatched him off the street as he left a demonstration against the crackdown.

He spent 167 days in custody, the longest stretch of detention of all those who participated in last year's revolt. The most serious charges against him were eventually dropped after Amnesty International and other rights groups condemned his jailing.

HK cuts council seats to exclude anti-China forces

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's legislature voted unanimously on Thursday to cut the number of elected seats in local councils, a move meant to prevent opposition figures from repeating their landslide win in 2019.

Beijing has cracked down on dissent in the finance hub since massive democracy protests four years ago, and has mandated that only "patriots" can hold public office. The previous election for Hong Kong's district councils was held at the height of the demonstrations, and was swept by the city's pro-democracy bloc.

The bill passed Thursday will slash directly elected seats at the councils from more than 90 percent to 20 percent. "We must plug the institutional loopholes and completely exclude those anti-China and destabilising forces from the (District Council)," city leader John Lee said after the bill's passage.

Lee and his ministers have accused pro-democracy councillors of being obstructionist and of "politicising" an advisory body meant only to handle livelihood issues such as transport routes and hygiene conditions. The next district council elections are scheduled for November.

Under the new rules, 80 percent of seats will either be filled via official appointment or selected

by government proxy groups. Candidates also face strict vetting. The percentage of elected seats will be lower than when the district councils were created in 1982 under British colonial rule, rolling back decades of democratisation efforts.

A European Union representative blasted the move, saying the new system "severely weakens the ability of the people of Hong Kong to choose representatives overlooking district affairs". It "goes against the commitment to democratic representation set out in the Hong Kong Basic Law", EU foreign affairs spokesperson Nabila Massrali said, referring to the charter that governs the Chinese city's semi-autonomous status.

Long-time councillor Paul Zimmerman had said in May that the new system "will not only destroy the final bastion of democracy in Hong Kong, it is ultimately a loss for everyone".

'Fewer democratic elements'

Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law on Hong Kong in 2020 after the pro-democracy protests. Critics say it has stifled dissent and curtailed political freedoms. More than 300 democratically elected district council members have since been unseated or resigned, with some leaving the city. Hong Kong's legislature was already revamped in 2021 to wipe out the opposition. Michael Tien, one of the 88 lawmakers who voted in favour of the bill on Thursday, acknowledged that the new system was less democratic. "Admittedly, this electoral reform proposal has fewer democratic elements," he said in a floor speech. "But democratic elements are not the goal of local governance." — AFP



HONG KONG: A banner (C) showing Kowloon City district council member Starry Lein the To Kwa Wan district of Hong Kong. Hong Kong's legislature voted unanimously on July 6 to cut the number of elected seats in local councils, a move meant to prevent opposition figures from repeating their landslide win in 2019. — AFP

Myanmar junta, rebels dispute deaths in village rocket attack

BANGKOK: Myanmar's junta accused anti-coup fighters of killing 15 civilians in a rocket attack, a claim disputed by the rebels who confirmed a raid but said the dead were members of a pro-military militia. The Southeast Asian nation has been in crisis since a 2021 coup that sparked renewed fighting with ethnic rebel groups and led to the creation of dozens of newer "People's Defence Forces" (PDF) now battling the junta. There are almost daily killings of low-level junta officials or alleged informers across Myanmar, with details murky and reprisals from the military often following quickly. A junta statement said 15 civilians were killed in a rocket attack by "PDF terrorists" on a village in Ayadaw township in northern Sagaing region on Wednesday.

Another seven people, including three Buddhist monks, were wounded, said the statement released late Wednesday. The wounded had been sent to a military hospital for treatment, it said, adding security forces were patrolling the area and seeking to arrest those responsible. A member of the anti-junta Local Defence Force in Ayadaw told

AFP the dead were not civilians but members of a pro-junta militia. "They often shell our civilian area, therefore we attacked their base," he said, asking not to use his name for fear of reprisals.

He said his group had raided Ngwedwin village on Wednesday morning and they had later seized some guns. PDF fighters had killed 16 members of the militia, he said, without giving details. BBC Burmese reported "more than" 15 people had been killed by "gunshot" in the Ngwedwin village, citing a local anti-coup fighter who said they belonged to the pro-junta militia.

AFP could not verify reports from the remote region, where the military periodically cuts internet access. The junta has discussed forming "village people's militia" as its troops struggle to overcome the armed uprising against its rule.

The groups have added to the volatile mix in Myanmar, where more than 20 ethnic rebel groups were already in various stages of conflict with the military before the coup. Meanwhile UN human rights chief Volker Turk said on Thursday up to 40 aid workers have been killed in Myanmar since the military coup that ousted democratically elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021.

In a report to the body's Human Rights Council, Turk condemned "direct attacks" on aid workers, who mainly work for local organisations, amid fighting between the military junta behind the coup and its opponents. He said the deaths were part of "deliberate and targeted" efforts to

17 dead in gas leak at South African slum

JOHANNESBURG: At least 17 people, including three children, have died after a gas leak at a South African slum near Johannesburg, possibly linked to illegal mining operations, emergency services said on Thursday. Initially, authorities had given a toll of around two dozen deaths from the leak on Wednesday night, although it had later been revised down to 16.

Panyaza Lesufi, premier of Gauteng province that encompasses South Africa's biggest city, said at the site of the disaster that one more person had died after being taken to hospital. "There are five others that were later admitted this morning. There is one under oxygen... Those in the hospital, the total number is 11," he told reporters.

Fire and emergency services received a call around 8:00 pm (1800 GMT) on Wednesday about a gas explosion in the Angelo slum east of Johannesburg. But on arrival they discovered it was "a gas leakage from a cylinder" containing a "poisonous gas", emergency services spokesman William Ntlati said.

He said the cause of the incident "is alleged to be a nitrate oxide gas leakage from the cylinder used in an illegal mining activity in and around the settlement". "Apparently, the illegal miners used the gas to extrapolate gold out of the soil," he said.

When they arrived at the scene near the middle-class suburb of Boksburg, first responders found

obstruct aid and "a calculated denial of fundamental rights and freedoms for large swathes of the population". The UN has already warned that obstruction or denial of humanitarian assistance may amount to serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws.

The junta has killed and injured thousands of civilians while destroying goods and infrastructure necessary for survival, including food, shelter, and medical centres, according to Turk's report.

An estimated 1.5 million people have been internally displaced and approximately 60,000 civilian structures have reportedly been burnt or destroyed, it says. More than 17.6 million people, or one third of the overall population, require some form of humanitarian assistance.

"Civilians live at the whim of a reckless military authority that relies on systematic control tactics, fear and terror," Turk told the council. "Credible sources indicate that as of yesterday, 3,747 individuals have died at the hands of the military since they took power, and 23,747 have been arrested," the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights said.

Those figures include only documented cases, meaning the actual toll is probably much higher.

In June, the United States announced sanctions against Myanmar's defence ministry and two "regime-controlled" banks that enable transactions between the military regime and foreign markets, to buy arms and other materials. — AFP

'Anarchist political forces'

Wickremesinghe has sought to restore Sri Lanka's ruined finances with an International Monetary Fund bailout that commits his administration to an austerity programme. The chronic food and fuel shortages that inflamed public anger last year have since ended as the government reined in public spending.

But steep tax hikes, and the end of generous subsidies on electricity and fuel, have been deeply unpopular. Wickremesinghe says the reforms are necessary to bring Sri Lanka out of bankruptcy and restore economic growth.

He pledged in February to press ahead "regardless of the obstacles that anarchist political forces seek to create". His administration has maintained a tough line against protests, with periodic demonstrations quickly dispersed by tear gas and water cannon trucks.

Mudalige said his detention and that of other protest leaders was an effort by the government to forestall a repeat of last year's unrest. But he warned the public's frustrations over the spiralling cost of living would inevitably bring people back to the streets, unbowed by the threat of violence. "The government is using the police and the military to suppress any dissent. It is like pressing down a rubber ball in a basin of water," he said. "You can't do it for long. It will inevitably bounce to the top." — AFP



BOKSBURG: Members of the South African Police Service's (SAPS) forensic department walk past a body covered with a blanket about 300 metres away from a scene where people died from a gas leak at the Angelo informal settlement in Boksburg on July 6, 2023. — AFP

scores of people "lying all over the area, due to inhalation of this toxic gas", Ntlati said.

Abandoned mine

Rescue workers and forensic police combed through the affected area—a cluster of squalid shacks built out of bricks and corrugated iron sheets—late into the night, AFP journalists saw. The area sits at the foot of an abandoned mine. Neighbours gathered around a fire during the cold southern hemisphere winter, watching the stream of uniformed police officers and investigators at work.

With a dizzying unemployment rate of more than 32 percent, South Africa is home to thousands of illegal miners known as "zama zamas", which means "those who try their luck" in Zulu. Thousands of unregistered miners scavenge obsolete mines for gold under arduous and often perilous conditions.

South Africa's commercial hub, Johannesburg, and its surrounding areas are built around mountainous dumps of soil and cavernous pits left behind by generations of mining companies that started extracting during a gold rush in the 1880s. Boksburg was last month struck by a 5.0 magnitude earthquake, suspected to have been linked to the maze of underground tunnels and shafts associated with illegal mining in the area.

The same suburb was also the scene of a massive gas tanker explosion that killed 41 people on Christmas Eve last year, after a truck carrying liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) got stuck under a bridge, triggering a leak and blast.

Among the victims were people and medics who had approached the scene either to help or see the trapped truck. Dozens at a nearby hospital, including patients and staff members, sustained serious burns after that explosion, which smashed windows and caused the roof to collapse. — AFP

Second Philippine judge quits trial of Duterte critic

MANILA: A Philippine judge quit the trial of jailed human rights activist Leila de Lima on Thursday, less than three weeks after another judge stepped down over accusations of bias. De Lima, an outspoken critic of former president Rodrigo Duterte and his anti-drug war, has been in jail for more than six years on narcotics-related charges she insists were fabricated to silence her. The 63-year-old is accused of taking money from inmates inside the largest prison in the Philippines to allow them to sell drugs while she was the justice minister from 2010 to 2015. Two of the three charges have been dismissed.

Judge Abraham Alcantara was assigned to preside over the third trial after the previous judge quit on June 16 following accusations of bias, which he denied. Alcantara had acquitted de Lima in May on the second drug trafficking charge. State prosecutors sought his removal from the current trial on the grounds that he would "carry over his perceptions". In his ruling issued Thursday, Alcantara rejected their reasoning but granted their motion to remove himself from the case to "put to rest any questions against his credibility, integrity, and fairness". — AFP

Business

FRIDAY, JULY 7, 2023

Stocks sink on higher US rate worries

Strength of the US jobs market has surprised economists

LONDON: Stock markets sank on Thursday as investors fretted over the prospect of more US interest-rate hikes and the risk to the global economy. Wall Street extended losses at the open while London was down 1.9 percent, Frankfurt more than two percent and Paris 2.6 percent in afternoon deals.

In Asia, Hong Kong plunged three percent. Equities were weighed down heavily by minutes released Wednesday on the Federal Reserve's last interest-rate meeting, which indicated that more hikes lay ahead aimed at bringing down elevated inflation. While growth remains healthy for now, the prospect of more rate hikes has stoked worries that the Fed could tip the economy into recession, weighing on risk sentiment.

The release Thursday of hotter-than-expected US employment data from payroll firm ADP, which estimated that private employers added 497,000 new jobs in June, raised the prospect of further Fed rate hikes. The strong figures come ahead of Friday's closely watched government jobs data.

The strength of the US jobs market has surprised economists who expected a bigger hit from the Fed's aggressive policies to counter inflation. "If a rate hike this month wasn't already nailed on, it probably is now," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at trading platform OANDA.

"It's no longer a question of if the Fed hikes this month but how many more after that?" The US central bank's next rate-policy meeting is on July 26. The Fed minutes caused US bond yields—the rate the government pays to borrow money—to rise as

investors anticipate more Fed hikes.

The UK government's borrowing costs also rose, with the yield on five-year bonds reaching a 15-year peak. The Fed minutes showed policymakers were split on the decision to stand pat last month after 10 straight rate increases, surprising some commentators and dealing a blow to hopes the bank was nearing the end of its tightening cycle.

Those backing an increase cited a tight jobs market, stronger-than-expected economic activity and few signs that inflation was on the path to the US central bank's two-percent target. In the end, however, all 11 voting members on the policy committee supported the pause, though the minutes said "almost all" agreed more tightening will likely be needed this year.

"It seems that the hawks were persuaded to toe the line in exchange for the prospects of further tightening later in the year," said Rodrigo Catril at National Australia Bank. "The minutes also show that this bias for further hikes is fuelled by an overriding concern over elevated price pressures and a tight labour market."

Markets have also been worried about the health of the world's second biggest economy, China, as another round of downbeat data this week highlighted the tough work facing authorities as they try to kickstart growth after years of zero-Covid-induced sluggishness. Investors were also tracking Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's four-day visit to Beijing, which aims to stabilise tense relations between the world's two largest economies. — AFP



TOKYO: Electronic quotation boards display the rate of the Japanese yen versus the US dollar at a foreign exchange brokerage in Tokyo. — AFP

Germany's 'China city' seeks new direction amid fraying ties

DUISBURG: Duisburg once touted itself as Germany's "China city" due to strong links to the Asian giant, but it is now desperately seeking an image makeover as geopolitical tensions upend bilateral ties. Located in Germany's rustbelt and long in decline, Duisburg got a welcome boost in 2014 when President Xi Jinping promoted it as a key stop on China's new "Silk Road" during a visit.

Huge numbers of freight trains were soon arriving from the world's second-largest economy to the biggest inland port on Earth, and a flurry of China-linked initiatives followed. But escalating tensions since Russia's invasion of Ukraine have prompted heightened concerns in Germany about relying too heavily on authoritarian powers, particularly China.

It comes as Europe's top economy is taking a harder line against China, its biggest trading partner, on other issues ranging from Beijing's sabre-rattling towards Taiwan to its human rights record. On the ground in Duisburg, population 500,000, the chill can be felt: a tie-up with Chinese telecoms giant Huawei has ended while shipping giant Cosco dumped its stake in a project at the port.

Markus Teuber, the dedicated China representative in Duisburg—the only German city to have such a role—insists that China remains an important partner but recognises times are changing. "There was a kind of 'China hype' after (President Xi Jinping's) visit," Teuber told AFP in an interview in the city's town hall. But he acknowledged that "the global political situation is different and it won't change so quickly. It won't be the same again as it was three, four years ago."

Changing times

The shift in Duisburg, northwestern Germany, is a microcosm of what is happening in the wider economy as tensions rise between Beijing and Berlin. Manufacturing powerhouse Germany has built up by far the biggest investments of any European country in China. Just four of its companies—automakers Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes-Benz along with chemicals giant BASF—accounted for a third of European investment in China between 2018 and 2021, according to a study by independent research firm Rhodium Group.

But in the first quarter of this year, German exports to China plummeted 12 percent compared to



DUISBURG: A truck drives past containers piled up at the port in Duisburg, western Germany. Duisburg once touted itself as Germany's "China city" due to strong links to the Asian giant, but it is now desperately seeking an image makeover as geopolitical tensions upend Beijing-Berlin ties. — AFP

the period a year earlier. Big firms are being impacted, with Volkswagen and BASF both suffering first-quarter sales slumps in China.

"Europe and Germany are more siding with the United States, through the eyes of China they are seen more as allies to the United States," ING economist Carsten Brzeski told AFP. "Whether it is conscious or unconscious, there will be more reluctance to buy 'made in Germany' these days." This adds to other factors putting the economic relationship under pressure, such as Chinese firms now manufacturing products that rival those from Germany, he said.

'Foreseeable risks'

Back in Duisburg, one of the most high-profile and controversial projects was the tie-up with Huawei, which has faced growing national security concerns in the West. Officials and the company signed a memorandum of understanding in 2017 that aimed to transform Duisburg into a "smart city" but the agreement was allowed to expire at the end of last year. Nothing concrete emerged from the tie-up, and it ended for "technical" rather than "political" reasons, Teuber insisted. Another initiative that drew attention was Chinese shipping giant Cosco's stake in a major new project in the port, Duisburg Gateway Terminal.

er admitted that he had been wrong in previous predictions on this timeline, but added: "I feel like we're closer to it than we ever have been." Musk has missed his own deadlines for a fully autonomous vehicle -- and Tesla's driver-assistance technology has provoked regulatory probes in the United States.

China is the world's biggest electric vehicle market and Tesla announced in April it would build a second massive factory in Shanghai. His appearance at the World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai marks his latest effort to maintain close links to China, following a visit to the country in May. Electric vehicles make up a quarter of car sales in China, the world's largest car market, and dozens of new models from domestic and Western brands were unveiled in April at the country's first auto show since COVID restrictions were lifted.

Tesla reported a drop in first-quarter earnings this year, with the company undertaking a series of price cuts in the face of competition from other automakers. — AFP

Musk predicts Tesla self-driving cars 'later this year'

SHANGHAI: Electric car giant Tesla is set to realise fully autonomous vehicles "later this year", CEO Elon Musk said Thursday, in the billionaire's latest forecast for the long-anticipated milestone.

"In terms of where Tesla is at this stage, I think we are very close to achieving full self-driving without human supervision," Musk said via video link at the opening ceremony of an artificial intelligence conference in Shanghai. "This is only speculation, but I think we'll achieve full self-driving, maybe what you would call four or five, I think later this year," the billionaire added, referring to two of the most advanced levels of autonomous driving technology.

The mercurial entrepreneur and Twitter own-

In June 2022, it transferred its shares to the port's owner, although the Duisport group—which encompasses the owner and other companies—said the transaction "had no political background". Despite the worsening geopolitical climate, about 30 freight trains still ply the rail route between Duisburg and destinations throughout China each week, with the journey, at up to 15 days, quicker than sea shipments.

That is down from 60 to 70 trains a week during the pandemic, when port closures pushed up demand for rail freight, but around the same level as prior to it. Officials now emphasise the approximately 200,000 containers travelling annually to and from China represent a small fraction of the four million handled by Duisburg's port each year.

Duisburg is not about to close the door, however, with Teuber insisting that the city remains open to doing business with China, noting that Chinese delegations started visiting again in recent months after a pandemic hiatus.

Political opponents, however, remain convinced that focusing so heavily on China was misguided. It was "definitely" a mistake, said Sven Benentreu, deputy chairman of the local chapter of the pro-business FDP party. "The risks were already foreseeable several years ago." — AFP



SHANGHAI: Tesla CEO Elon Musk speaks via video link at the opening ceremony of the World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC) in Shanghai. Electric car giant Tesla is set to realise fully autonomous vehicles "later this year", CEO Elon Musk said. — AFP

Some Fed officials backed rate hike in June, minutes show

WASHINGTON: Several members of the US Federal Reserve's rate-setting committee supported another interest rate hike in June to tackle high inflation, but ultimately voted for a pause, the Fed announced Wednesday.

The Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) voted unanimously last month to pause interest rate hikes after 10 consecutive increases, giving policymakers more time to assess the impact of rate hikes and recent banking stresses on the US economy.

At the same time, FOMC members forecast that two additional increases to its benchmark lending rate would likely be needed before the end of the year to bring inflation back down. Minutes from the meeting published by the Fed on Wednesday show some FOMC members went into the meeting on June 13-14 favoring another quarter percentage-point hike to bring inflation back down towards the committee's long-term target of two percent.

"Some participants indicated that they favored raising the target range for the federal funds rate 25 basis points at this meeting or that they could have supported such a proposal," the Fed minutes showed. Those in favor of another hike "noted that the labor market remained very tight, momentum in economic activity had been stronger than earlier anticipated, and there were few clear signs that inflation was on a path to return to the Committee's 2 percent objective over time," the Fed said. In the end, however, all 11 voting members on the FOMC supported holding rates steady.

'More work to do'

Speaking Wednesday afternoon, New York Fed President and FOMC member John Williams said the committee had "more work to do" to bring down inflation. "Do we have more to do in terms of monetary policy? I think the incoming data support that hypothesis," he told a conference in New York.

Futures traders see a probability of close to 90 percent that the Fed will raise its benchmark lending rate by a quarter percentage-point at its next meeting on July 25-26. Fed Chair Jerome Powell has left the door open to consecutive interest rate hikes in the months ahead, if needed, to cool the economy further.

"I wouldn't take, you know, moving to consecutive meetings off the table at all," he told an audience in Portugal last month. The minutes published Wednesday showed that Fed economists still expect the United States to enter a "mild recession" later this year.

But strong recent labor and consumer spending data meant "the possibility of the economy continuing to grow slowly and avoiding a downturn as almost as likely as the mild-recession baseline," the Fed said. — AFP

Business

Colombian coffee growers welcome truce with 'Paddington' bear

EL AGUILA: In a coffee-growing region of Colombia, the world's third-largest producer, a group of farmers have declared a truce with an indigenous inhabitant they once hunted but now hail—the "Spectacled Bear" of the tropical Andes.

Calling a halt to their forest encroachment, the farmers are instead sacrificing parts of their land for the benefit of South America's last surviving bear species, believed to have been the inspiration for the popular children's book character Paddington Bear.

"The bear saved us," Julian Pinilla, 37, told AFP on his farm in El Aguila, in Colombia's western Valle del Cauca department. He and nine neighbors are participants in a program called "Conservamos la vida" (We preserve life) that provides help and resources for farmers in exchange for bear protection.

"We gave part of our farm for conservation and we see that the forest has increased as well as the species that live there," said Pinilla. "We no longer have so much conflict." Pinilla has contributed 28 hectares of the land his family has farmed for generations.

All the neighbors together have given up about 400 hectares, part of a larger swath of 3,000 hectares put aside for the Spectacled Bear in the so-called Western Range of the Colombian Andes. Also known as the Andean Bear, the omnivorous animal is native to the mountain range—all the way from Argentina to Venezuela.

In the hit children's book and film series, marmalade-loving Paddington Bear originally hails from the jungles of Peru. But while Paddington is a beloved fictional character, the real Spectacled Bear was long perceived as a threat by farmers: ruining crops and even killing cattle as it is forced to roam and feed beyond its ever-shrinking habitat.

Thanks to "Conservamos la vida," farmers like Pinilla now have nothing but praise for the bear that

can be either black or dark brown, and whose white markings around its eyes account for its name.

Andean Bear coffee

In return for bear protection, participants receive materials they need for coffee growing and processing, animal feed, infrastructure such as water treatment and septic tanks, and help fencing in their domesticated animals—out of reach of hungry bears. Another benefit has been the creation of "Cafe Oso Andino" (Andean Bear Coffee) -- an export label that has created many jobs in the region, according to project leaders. Spectacled Bears are classified as "vulnerable" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of threatened species. Conservation group WWF estimates that in 2017 there were about 8,000 bears left in Colombia.

Spectacled Bears are somewhat smaller than the bears of Europe or North America, standing between 1.3 meters (4.2 feet) and 1.9 meters tall and weighing between 80 and 125 kilograms (176-275 pounds). They eat mainly fibrous vegetation and fruit, but also occasionally meat.

Often slaughtered in retaliation for killing livestock or ruining crops, the bears are also sometimes targeted for ritual or medicinal purposes or for trade, according to the IUCN. Live bears are sometimes captured and sold. "It is not known how many... are lost each year," said Mauricio Vela-Vargas, a biologist with the Wildlife Conservation Society, one of the bodies behind the conservation project launched in 2015. Actual bear numbers may be lower than thought, he told AFP, and in many areas they are still at risk of violent encounters with their Number One enemy: humankind.

'Giving oxygen'

A case in point is the Chingaza National Natu-



VALLE DEL CAUCA: Coffee farmer Julian Pinilla uses a coffee grinder during an interview with AFP in Valle del Cauca, Colombia. — AFP

ral Park near Bogota, where thousands of tourists flock every year in the hopes of spotting a Spectacled Bear. "This population does not have much of a future," said Daniel Rodriguez, director of the WII Foundation, so called after an Indigenous name for the bears that roam freely in the park but sometimes leave in search of food and "get killed" in areas inhabited by humans.

Park official Yulieth Alvarado told AFP that "sensitization" efforts were underway so people near the park "can understand the importance of the species and also be our allies in conservation." Spectacled

bears are considered an "umbrella species" whose protection tends to indirectly benefit others that share its habitat.

In El Aguila, Pinilla and other farmers install and monitor forest cameras to help keep a discreet eye on their new proteges. They have captured evidence of a wide array of creatures: crab-eating foxes, agoutis, armadillos, ocelots... even a baby Spectacled Bear playing with its mother. "We are conserving the bear. We are (protecting) a part of the forest that is giving oxygen... not only to the bear, but to all people," said Pinilla. "This fills us with satisfaction." — AFP

Berlusconi's eldest daughter, son to control Fininvest

MILAN: Marina and Pier Silvio Berlusconi will jointly control holding company Fininvest, after the death last month of their father, ex-premier Silvio Berlusconi, a financial source told AFP following the reading of his will. The two siblings, children of Berlusconi and the media magnate's first wife Carla

Dall'Oglio, will together hold a 53 percent stake in Fininvest. Until now, they held 7.65 percent.

Berlusconi's other three children, Luigi, Eleonora and Barbara, from his second marriage to Veronica Lario, will together control the remaining 47 percent of Fininvest, the source added.

They previously jointly owned 21.42 percent. Berlusconi, who died June 12 at the age of 86 and whose fortune was valued by Forbes at 6.4 billion euros (\$7 billion), controlled 61.21 percent of Fininvest. "No shareholder will exercise overall individual indirect control of Fininvest SpA, previously exercised by their father himself," said Fininvest in a brief statement Thursday, confirming that the contents of the

will had been communicated to the heirs.

The family holding company controls a myriad of companies, including the MediaForEurope (ex-Mediastel) television group, headed by Pier Silvio Berlusconi, Mondadori publishing house, chaired by Marina Berlusconi, and the Mediolanum bank.

Marina Berlusconi, president of Fininvest since 2005, was confirmed in her position at a shareholders' meeting at the end of June, as was CEO Danilo Pellegrino. That meeting also approved the payment of 100 million euros in dividends to Fininvest shareholders this year, versus 150 million euros in 2022.

Net profit fell by 44 percent to 200.2 million eu-

ros last year — after 2021 earnings were inflated by capital gains from the sale of telecom infrastructure operator TowerTel — while sales remained virtually stable at 3.82 billion euros.

Net assets amounted to 4.55 billion euros. Following the announcement of Silvio Berlusconi's death, MediaForEurope's share price soared for several days on the Milan Stock Exchange, with investors betting on a sale of the group or a merger.

Fininvest then cut short the rumours, assuring investors that its activities "will continue in a line of absolute continuity in all respects". "In the family, we have never talked about selling Mediastel," Pier Silvio Berlusconi said Tuesday. — AFP

AL SAFAT INVESTMENT COMPANY			KUWAIT BOURSA WEEKLY REPORT										Valuation Multiples *				
No.	Ticker	Sector	Price Movement & Performance										Valuation Multiples *				
			Open Price	Close Price	Week High	Week Low	Range	Volume	WTD Change	WTD %	YTD %	Support Level	Resistance Level	P/E	P/B	Yield	Beta
101	National Bank of Kuwait	Banking	934	957	970	935	35	18,253,773	22	2.35%	-6.79%	940	958	15.1	1.94	3.5%	1.02
102	Gulf Bank	Banking	261	269	273	265	8	20,228,504	4	1.51%	-10.05%	261	270	14.1	1.28	3.5%	1.32
106	Kuwait International Bank	Banking	167	168	171	165	6	69,466,642	-2	-1.18%	-6.22%	167	173	20.7	0.56	2.2%	1.14
107	Burgan Bank	Banking	208	210	213	207	6	5,639,216	0	0.00%	0.68%	202	212	19.3	0.78	3.6%	1.32
108	Kuwait Finance House	Banking	741	765	768	747	21	58,492,649	20	2.68%	2.25%	762	784	22.7	1.95	1.8%	1.15
109	Boubyan Bank	Banking	635	654	661	639	22	13,611,623	14	2.19%	-13.13%	642	669	47.7	2.92	0.9%	1.24
201	Kuwait Investment	Financial Services	123	128	129	126	3	7,054,181	1	0.79%	-15.79%	125	129	-	0.60	3.9%	1.82
204	National Investments	Financial Services	202	217	217	205	12	15,875,432	13	6.37%	-8.44%	214	220	-	0.87	13.3%	1.98
205	Kuwait Projects	Financial Services	132	134	136	132	4	14,297,654	0	0.00%	19.64%	132	137	23.7	0.80	0.0%	1.00
212	Arzan Financial Group	Financial Services	107	110	111	108	3	13,468,936	3	2.80%	-2.43%	106	110	10.4	0.79	3.6%	1.16
222	Aayan Leasing and Investment	Financial Services	147	147	151	146	5	25,284,211	0	0.00%	10.53%	146	151	10.1	1.10	5.1%	1.67
252	Al Imtiaz Investment	Financial Services	65.0	69.1	70	64.6	5.4	12,330,514	4.4	6.80%	-7.74%	65.5	69.1	-	0.43	13.2%	1.29
401	Kuwait Real Estate	Real Estate	117	122	125	119	6	18,085,871	1	0.83%	16.35%	119	124	11.4	0.86	2.4%	1.12
413	Mabaneer	Real Estate	839	880	888	841	47	4,228,292	39	4.64%	10.00%	872	888	18.4	2.00	1.5%	1.07
418	The Commercial Real Estate	Real Estate	103	102	106	102	4	11,803,996	-2	-1.92%	6.23%	102	105	16.9	0.64	2.8%	0.58
501	National Industries	Financial Services	201	220	220	201	19	22,302,867	17	8.37%	6.45%	217	226	-	0.96	2.3%	1.58
505	Gulf Cable	Industrials	1,133	1,159	1,170	1,145	25	289,593	13	1.13%	-4.61%	1,149	1,202	12.5	1.07	5.2%	1.05
506	HEISCO	Industrials	660	690	706	671	35	2,205,286	19	2.83%	12.56%	668	700	24.6	1.78	2.8%	0.95
514	Boubyan Petrochemical	Basic Materials	742	738	751	735	16	2,301,366	-7	-0.94%	-7.75%	732	750	11.0	1.41	8.1%	0.93
603	Agility	Industrials	619	631	644	626	18	15,792,159	8	1.28%	-12.36%	618	656	22.9	0.89	0.0%	1.53
605	Zain	Telecommunications	515	523	529	517	12	23,635,109	5	0.97%	-7.10%	512	528	11.2	1.77	6.7%	0.65
623	Human Soft Holding	Industrials	3,723	3,768	3,799	3,690	109	682,151	62	1.67%	12.40%	3,751	3,804	10.3	3.33	10.1%	0.65
642	ALAFCO	Industrials	197	200	203	193	10	804,096	3	1.52%	-1.48%	198	206	-	0.86	0.0%	1.17
654	JAZEERA	Consumer Discretionary	1,810	2,054	2,089	1,855	234	1,058,793	202	10.91%	8.11%	1,958	2,084	23.5	15.91	4.0%	1.43
813	GFH Financial Group	Financial Services	86.2	88.5	91	87.7	3.3	44,697,817	1.2	1.37%	16.45%	86.3	90	10.4	1.03	5.5%	1.36
821	Warba Bank	Banking	210	215	217	212	5	20,071,496	2	0.94%	-5.77%	212	218	31.9	1.17	1.4%	1.13
823	Mezzan Holding	Consumer Staples	525	537	540	530	10	2,130,612	4	0.75%	36.64%	519	541	-	1.54	2.3%	0.46
824	Integrated Holding	Industrials	429	437	451	435	16	3,167,872	-1	-0.23%	18.11%	420	445	40.7	1.73	3.4%	0.75
826	Shamal Az-Zour	Utilities	197	204	208	197	11	3,583,528	4	2.00%	8.51%	201	205	16.6	2.04	8.4%	0.46
827	Boursa Kuwait	Financial Services	1,858	1,866	1,900	1,846	54	687,024	16	0.86%	-9.06%	1,855	1,900	22.0	7.12	4.5%	0.96
830	AL GHANIM	Consumer Discretionary	996	1,055	1,070	996	74	2,458,407	58	5.82%	31.06%	1,033	1,069	12.8	3.92	5.7%	0.29

* As of end of week closing

Business

Taiwan chip giant sees no production hit from China curb on rare metals

TAIPEI: Taiwan's chip giant TSMC said Thursday it did not expect any direct effect on production from China's latest export controls on two rare metals essential for making semiconductors. China's Ministry of Commerce and Customs announced Monday that exports of gallium and germanium will require a license from August 1 over security concerns, as Beijing and Washington tussle over the global market for chips.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, whose clients include Apple and Intel, controls more than half the world's output of the silicon wafers that are used to power everything from drip coffee machines to cars and missiles. "After evaluation, we do not expect the export restrictions on raw materials gallium and germanium will have any direct impact on TSMC's production," the company said in a statement.

TSMC did not elaborate on the long-

term indirect impacts but said it would monitor the situation closely. China is sparring with the United States over a range of issues, including technology, trade and Taiwan. Home not just to TSMC, self-ruled Taiwan is the world's primary manufacturing base of semiconductors, a dominance that has become more pronounced given the global demand for microchips and China's increasingly strained relations with the island.

Beijing claims Taiwan as its own territory and has held two massive military drills around the island in the past year. Taiwan's economic minister Wang Mei-hua also downplayed the impact of the new export controls because Chinese-mined germanium and gallium are mainly raw materials that are then refined in countries such as the United States and Japan.

"Taiwan imports the refined materi-

als so the short-term impact is limited," she told reporters on Tuesday. "We will closely monitor the impact of long-term (export) restrictions on the international market in terms of pricing and supply."

Gallium, found in integrated circuits, LEDs and photovoltaic panels for solar panels, among other things, is considered a critical raw material by the European Union. China accounted for 80 percent of global gallium production, according to a 2020 report by the European Commission.

Germanium is essential for making optical fibres and infrared camera lenses, with 80 percent of it also coming from China, according to the same report. The export curbs follow Washington's blacklisting of Chinese companies in recent years in a move aimed at cutting them off from access to American technologies, including the most advanced chips. — AFP



SHANGHAI: A chip of ILUVATAR CoreX Semiconductor is seen during the World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC) in Shanghai on July 6, 2023. — AFP

JetBlue to end American Airlines joint venture

NEW YORK: JetBlue said Wednesday it will wind down an alliance with American Airlines rather than challenge a US court ruling that determined the joint venture was anti-competitive. While JetBlue held a "deep conviction" that the Northeast Alliance (NEA) with American enhanced the offerings to customers at New York and Boston airports, the carrier "has made the difficult decision not to appeal the court's determination," JetBlue said in a statement.

The company has "instead initiated the termination of the NEA, beginning a wind down process that will take place over the coming months," it added. The move comes after US District Judge Leo Sorokin sided in May with the federal Department of Justice (DOJ) in concluding that the American-JetBlue alliance at Boston's Logan Airport and the three New York City-area airports was anti-competitive.

JetBlue said it would now focus instead on winning approval for its \$3.8 billion takeover of low-cost carrier Spirit Airlines, which the Justice Department has also challenged in a separate case. "As it relates to the Spirit combination, terminating the NEA renders the US Department of Justice's concerns about our partnership with a legacy carrier entirely moot," JetBlue said. "With that, the DOJ should reconsider and support our plan to bring a national low-fare competitor to the Big Four; the flying public deserves better than the status quo."

The Justice Department in March sued to block the Spirit deal, arguing that removing low-cost Spirit would expose tens of millions of travelers to higher fares. — AFP



FORT LAUDERDALE: A JetBlue plane taxis to its gate past an American Airlines plane at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. — AFP

Canada, Stellantis to resume construction of battery plant

MONTREAL: Canada has reached an agreement with carmaker Stellantis to immediately resume construction of a battery plant, ministers announced Wednesday, after the project was suspended over a subsidies disagreement. The plant in Windsor, Ontario, a Can\$5 billion (US\$3.8 billion) joint venture to supply EV batteries for a significant portion of the North American market, was billed by Ottawa as the largest-ever investment in the country's auto sector.

But Stellantis suspended the project in May, saying the federal government had not delivered promised subsidies. On Wednesday, Canadian Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland announced an agreement had been reached. "This agreement is good for workers and good for Canada," Freeland said in a statement shared on Twitter.

Stellantis said in a separate statement that construction of the plant could resume "as of now", and that battery production was scheduled to begin in 2024. "This collective effort made the agreement possible, and we are now resuming construction at the Windsor site," said Mark Stewart, Stellantis' COO for North America.

Ottawa has made considerable efforts in recent years to attract investment in its electric vehicle sector, touting tax incentives and clean energy subsidies. Canada's strategy is in line with that of its biggest trading partner, the United States, whose Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provides billions in subsidies for green industries. — AFP

China unveils new operating system amid US tensions

BEIJING: China has launched its first home-grown open-source operating system for computers, state media said on Thursday, as Beijing seeks to reduce its foreign dependence at a time of increased rivalry with the United States.

The announcement of the new system came just before US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen was due to land in Beijing on Thursday for meetings with Chinese officials aimed in part

at stabilizing relations between the world's two leading economies.

The system, called OpenKylin, has been designed as a rival to the ubiquitous Windows and MacOS systems. Previous versions of the software had already been deployed on the computers of some government departments, state media said.

OpenKylin users have access to the software's lines of code and can modify them as they wish, unlike Microsoft and Apple, which keep the workings of their Windows and MacOS systems secret. China has long regarded that opacity as a vulnerability, one that has been reinforced in recent years by geopolitical tensions with the United States.

OpenKylin, whose name refers to a legend in Chinese mythology, is based on the popular open-source Linux operating system. Windows is used

on the vast majority of computers in China, despite Beijing's stated desire over recent decades to create its own operating system. Authorities have in particular sought alternatives for use on high-security computers, such as those used by the army. According to state-owned CGTN television, Chinese space programmes have already used previous versions of OpenKylin, including the Chang'e lunar and Tianwen Mars missions.

Microsoft launched a version of Windows specifically for the Chinese government in 2017, in partnership with a local joint venture, to allay security concerns. Chinese telecoms giant Huawei, which is facing US sanctions, launched its HarmonyOS operating system for smartphones and tablets in 2021 after being stripped of its licence for the Google-owned Android operating system. — AFP



MIAMI BEACH: The General Motors Company (GMC) company logo is seen on the rear of one of the company's Sport Utility Vehicles (SUV) at the South Florida International Auto Show in Miami Beach, Florida. Leading automakers reported a jump in quarterly US car sales on July 5, 2023, reflecting increased vehicle inventory levels and the support of a strong US labor market. — AFP

Automakers report higher Q2 car sales in US

NEW YORK: Leading automakers reported a jump in quarterly US car sales Wednesday, reflecting increased vehicle inventory levels and the support of a strong US labor market. General Motors scored a 19 percent rise in deliveries for the second quarter to 691,978 behind strong gains in vehicle groups that included its Sierra pickup truck and its premium Cadillac brand.

The big US automaker also pointed to higher sales from the Chevrolet Trax, a smaller sport utility vehicle at a more affordable price point. The Trax starts at \$21,495, less than half the average vehicle price in the United States for a new car or truck.

The higher quarterly sales enabled GM to score an 18.3 percent increase in sales through the first half of 2023. Two other large auto companies — Toyota and Stellantis — also had higher sales in the second quarter, although both were down slightly for the entire first semester of 2023.

Sri Lanka cuts rates after debt restructure

COLOMBO: Cash-strapped Sri Lanka cut interest rates on Thursday, a week after announcing a major debt restructuring in line with an IMF bailout following an unprecedented economic crisis last year.

The Central Bank of Sri Lanka slashed the benchmark lending rate by two percentage points to 12 percent, after unveiling the overhaul that involved a 30 percent haircut for foreign bond holders. The move also followed a sharp decline in inflation to 12 percent in June, down from 25.2 percent in May and a record high of 69.8 percent in September that was fuelled by soaring food prices.

It forecast inflation to fall to single figures by the end of the year. The bank said it made the cut, the second since July 2020, "following a careful analysis of the current and expected developments, including the faster-than-expected disinflation process and benign inflation expectations".

It cut rates 2.5 percentage points in June. The bankrupt nation secured a four-year, \$2.9 billion International Monetary Fund bailout in March, and received the first installment of \$330 million in March. Last year, Sri Lanka ran out of cash to pay for even the most essential imports, leading to shortages of food, fuel and medicines.

As the economic crisis worsened, the central

bank began raising rates from early 2022 with a record seven-percentage-point hike in April last year, a week before the government defaulted on its \$46 billion foreign debt.

Then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who faced allegations of mismanagement, was forced to flee the country and resign in July 2022 after months of protests. — AFP

Canadian govt to stop buying ads on Facebook, Instagram

OTTAWA: Canada's government will stop buying ads on Facebook and Instagram, Heritage Minister Pablo Rodriguez announced Wednesday, as a feud heats up with tech giants over a new media compensation law. The Online News Act, adopted by parliament last month, requires digital giants like Google and Meta to make commercial deals to compensate Canadian news outlets when users access articles through their products, or face binding arbitration.

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, announced soon after the bill passed that it would take measures to block Canadian news for users on its platforms in the country. Rodriguez described those actions on Wednesday as "unreasonable" and "irresponsible." "This is why today we are announcing that the government of Canada will be suspending its advertising on Facebook and Instagram," he said, estimating the cost to Facebook and Instagram at around Can\$10 million (US\$7.5 million) a year.

Google has also announced it will take similar actions to resist the law. The two companies, who dominate online advertising, have been accused of draining cash away from traditional news organizations while using their content for free. "Canadians are not going to be intimidated by American billionaires who want to undermine our democracy," said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, adding that his government would not back down from its decision.

According to the Department of Canadian Heritage, more than 450 Canadian media outlets have closed their doors since 2008. An October 2022 report by Canada's parliamentary budget watchdog estimated the Online News Act would see Canadian newspapers receive about Can\$330 million per year from digital platforms. Canada's measure builds on Australia's New Media Bargaining Code, a world first, which made Google and Meta pay for news content on their platforms. California legislators are also aiming to enact a similar policy. AFP signed a five-year agreement on "neighboring rights" with Google at the end of 2021 for the internet giant to pay for content from the news agency. It also signed two commercial deals with the platform. — AFP



COLOMBO: Vendors sell vegetables at a market in Colombo. Bankrupt Sri Lanka's bearish bourse made a dramatic turnaround on the first day of trading since the government unveiled a plan to restructure its huge debt burden. — AFP

Then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, who faced allegations of mismanagement, was forced to flee the country and resign in July 2022 after months of protests. — AFP

Lifestyle

'Unimaginable': Austria's highest paradise feels heat of climate change



Motorists drive on the Grossglockner High Alpine Road from and towards Austria's highest Grossglockner peak.--AFP photos



Austria's highest peak Grossglockner is seen high from Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Hohe view point that is part of the Grossglockner High Alpine Road.



A man drives a BMW Isetta car on the Grossglockner High Alpine Road from and towards Austria's highest Grossglockner peak (3798m).

Ever since Herbert Hoegl and his wife first drove up the majestic Grossglockner High Alpine Road, named after Austria's highest mountain, the breathtaking vistas that the route offers have been imprinted on their minds. Now, twenty years later, he and his wife struggle to recognize one of the Alps' most characteristic landscapes featuring the jagged Pasterze glacier, whose length these days is nearly eight kilometers (five miles).

In the early 2000s, the ice field "went all the way up there, so you could take the lift down and walk straight onto the Pasterze," Hoegl said of the longest glacier in the Eastern Alps. "Now it's 100-150 meters further away," said the 58-year-old IT specialist.

Up to one million people visit the scenic Grossglockner road, renowned for its 36 treacherous hairpin bends, from early May until late October each year, travelling by car, motorbike or bicycle. It is nestled amid the Hohe Tauern national park famous for its hillsides blooming with wildflowers, lush forests, waterfalls and lakes. Authorities have introduced a speed limit to help protect the unique Alpine landscape, and electric vehicles benefit from a reduced ac-



A tourists looks at the melting Pasterze glacier from the Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Hohe view point that is part of the Grossglockner High Alpine Road.

cess fee for enjoying the 48-kilometre route, where cyclists in particular are encouraged.

'Status symbol'

Loosely following the ancient trade route used by the Romans and the Celts, the Grossglockner road in its current form was built between 1930 and 1935 in the midst of the Great Depression. Some 3,000 unemployed men were put to work on the mammoth project, manually carving the road out

of the mountain in line with a design conceived by Austrian civil engineer Franz Wallack.

Connecting the town of Bruck near Salzburg to the 3,798-metre Grossglockner, the Alpine route became one of the first major modern mountain roads designed for motorized tourism. To this day, the road serves as a test track for the luxury sports car maker Porsche.

Keen to restore its image after the fall of the Habsburg Empire, the road "was intended as a status symbol for Austria", explained mountain guide Heike Renger. During winter months, the route becomes inaccessible due to the snow masses. In the 1930s, 350 men had to be employed for 70 days to clear away the snow with their shovels—nowadays, snowploughs remove it within two weeks in spring. "The snow clearing efforts are enormous before the road can reopen (every year)," Bavarian retiree Juergen Neumann told AFP.

Glacier retreat

Alpine glaciers saw a new record mass loss for a single year in 2022, caused by very low winter levels of snow, a hot summer as well as deposits of wind-blown Saharan dust. Experts



Tourists are exploring the view of the melting Pasterze glacier (right) that has an altitude of 2,369 meters and Austria's highest peak Grossglockner peak (3798 m) from the Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Hohe view point that is part of the Grossglockner High Alpine Road.

have warned that Austrian glaciers will melt away by 2075 at the latest. Compared to his last visit, Neumann said it is "unimaginable that the glacier has retreated by such an amount in a short period of ten to fifteen years".

Over the past few years, Renger has also observed considerable changes she attributes to global warming.

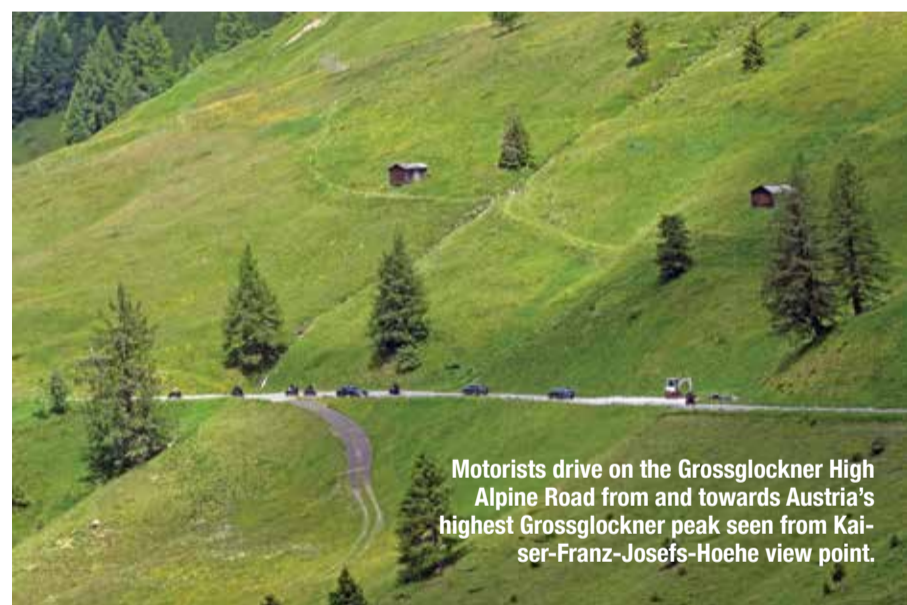
"These days the sunrays are more intense and there is less snow, which explains why the glacier is melting," Renger said. Despite the high altitude, temperatures last year surpassed 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit) at day's end, she added.—AFP



Austria's highest peak Grossglockner peak is seen high from Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Hohe view point that is part of the Grossglockner High Alpine Road.



Austria's highest peak Grossglockner is pictured from the Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Hohe view point.



Motorists drive on the Grossglockner High Alpine Road from and towards Austria's highest Grossglockner peak seen from Kaiser-Franz-Josefs-Hohe view point.



A volunteer pulls a sack of waste items collected by a group of scuba enthusiasts from the bed of Lake Issyk Kul out of water in Cholpon-Ata.



A group of volunteer divers works to collect waste from the bed of Lake Issyk Kul in Cholpon-Ata, some 250 km from Bishkek.

Rubbish-clearing divers come to rescue of 'pearl of Kyrgyzstan'

On the shores of Lake Issyk Kul in mountainous Kyrgyzstan, a group of divers show off their haul for the day—a boat engine, car tyres, bottles, clothes and plastic items. "We would love to dive and not find any waste," said Anvar Shamsutdinov, the moustachioed 59-year-old leader of a dozen-strong team of volunteer scuba enthusiasts. "The beach looks clean but people don't realize what's underwater," he said, as tourists stopped to look.

Surrounded by snowy Central Asian peaks over 4,000 meters (13,000 feet) tall, Issy Kul is the second largest high mountain lake in the world. The year's brief but intense summer high season has just got under way in this picturesque region of the former Soviet republic, where the nearest seaside is thousands of kilometers (miles) away.

But the flow of visitors and the rubbish they leave behind are endangering this vast lake known as the "pearl of Kyrgyzstan"—whose pristine waters are highly vulnerable to pollution. The lake area is a UNESCO heritage site, a home for wolves and eagles, and a win-

tering ground for tens of thousands of migrating waterbirds.

"In 2014, we were doing some underwater orientation and we realized the situation under water was terrible," Shamsutdinov said. "So we decided to clean up the lake," said the diver, who estimates he has collected 20 tons of waste since creating his association "Clean Issyk Kul".

For future generations?

On a visit to the lake earlier this year, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov cautioned about the dangers and urged the public to preserve the lake. "Why is there so much indifference and insensitivity towards our beloved lake?" he asked. "Cleanliness is about cleaning

up. It's about not dumping rubbish in the first place." The emergency situations ministry has also sent divers to help Shamsutdinov and his team of volunteers.

These initiatives are all welcomed by Gulzam Satybaldieva, who runs a shop on the beach at one of the lake's main resorts, Cholpon-Ata, and is grateful to "divers who are sensitive to environmental problems". "If tourists and (local residents) followed their example, we would be able to pass on a clean lake to future generations," she said.

But in Kyrgyzstan, as in the whole of Central Asia, the recycling industry suffers from underinvestment and the problems at Issyk Kul point to broader environmental issues, like smog from

coal burning and nuclear waste lingering from the Soviet period. "We haven't cleaned the lake in 30 years—since independence" from the Soviet Union, said Aidar Kaptagayev, a diver from the emergency situations ministry. He has been diving in the lake since March at depths of up to 40 metres to get rubbish out.

'Bringing shame'

Apart from petrol and waste from factories and other industrial facilities, which put at risk the lake's plant life, plastic and fishing nets endanger animals. But environmental awareness is slow to take hold. Shamsutdinov said he and his team are sometimes even accused of "bringing shame" on the country by showing how much waste is thrown in the water. The manager of a cafe on the lake shore, Ruslan Myrzalyev, said that "some tourists don't really respect rules on waste, despite requests".

Vera Argokova, a 62-year-old tourist from Russia's Altai region, said she was particularly careful. "We do not bring food onto the beach, only a bottle. We want everything to stay clean," said Argokova, who was staying at the "Blue Issyk Kul" sanatorium, decorated with Soviet-era statues including one of Lenin. "We don't want to be relaxing surrounded by rubbish."—AFP



A group of volunteer divers works to collect waste from the bed of Lake Issyk Kul in Cholpon-Ata, some 250 km from Bishkek.--AFP photos

Lifestyle



Visitors queue outside the Casa Stradivari in Cremona after the opening of the house where the most famous of violin makers, Antonio Stradivari, lived and had his workshop in 1667.--AFP photos



French violin maker Benedicte Friedmann works on the body of a violin in her Cremona workshop.



A violin is pictured in the French violin maker Benedicte Friedmann's workshop in Cremona.

VIOLINS IN THE SUN: STRADIVARI'S HOME WORKSHOP REOPENS IN ITALY

For over three centuries, music lovers the world over have been trying to unlock the secrets of Antonio Stradivari's prized string instruments. Budding luthiers and young musicians can now get a step closer to the master by honing their skills in his original house and workshop, which have been transformed into a centre of learning and a musical pilgrimage site in northern Italy.

"The Stradivarius myth was born between these walls, and it was here that (Stradivari's) vision of the violin's perfect resonance began to germinate", said violinist Fabrizio von Arx, who set up the foundation which restored the house in Cremona. "It's magic, I feel the vibrations", the 47-year-old Italian-Swiss violinist told AFP as he walked around the medieval building, home to the famous luthier, whose instruments took the Latin form of his name, Stradivarius, between 1667 and 1680.

The centre opened to visitors this week. The original beams in the living room have been restored. Gone, however, are traces of Stradivari's workshop on the ground floor, which was moved to another house in Cremona and later demolished. Two work benches



French violin maker Benedicte Friedmann poses in her Cremona workshop.

es have now been set up in its place, which fledgling stringed instrument craftsmen and women will be able to use. Young musicians will also attend masterclasses here.

A highlight of the house—where Stradivari lived with his first wife and their six children—is the covered terrace on the roof, which has entered into folklore. "This is where he hung his violins to dry them in the light of the setting sun. Hence the enigmatic color of their varnish, between red, brown and orange", von Arx said.

Cremona is home to luthiers from all over the world, and Stradivari used the same varnish as others in the town, von Arx said. One of the secrets of the Stradivarius sound is believed to be the violins' exposure to the elements on this terrace, explained von Arx. "With the heat and humidity that prevails in Cremona, the wood of the violins moves a lot and then stabilizes better," he said. After work, the master "spent time in the living room with his musician friends to listen to his violins, and perfect them with their help."

Unequaled master

Of the 1,100 violins, cellos, violas and other stringed instruments made by Stradivarius, who died in 1737 aged 93, some 650 survive. The "Lady Blunt" Stradivarius, which sold for \$15.89 million in 2011, holds the record for the price fetched by a violin at auction.

French violin maker Benedicte Friedmann, 48, is one of more than 180 luthiers based in Cremona, a city with fewer than 70,000 inhabitants. Chisels, pairing tools, bandsaws and small planes hang on the wall above her workbench where she carefully finishes a violin neck, and prepares to apply the varnish to the instrument, string it, and add the bridge.

It usually takes Friedmann around six weeks to finish her creations, using the same techniques as 300 years ago. "The only thing that has changed are the tools, which have been slightly modernized," said the trained violinist, who tests her creations herself.

Friedmann told AFP there was no "miracle formula" for a Stradivarius, but perhaps the master's success lay in how he varnished his creations. "The varnish is very important from an acoustic point of view, because if it is too hard, it prevents the violin from vibrating," she said. Stradivari achieved "acoustic and



Fabrizio von Arx, Italian violinist and artistic director of Casa Stradivari, poses next to his 1720 Stradivarius violin in Cremona.

aesthetic perfection," said Friedmann, calling him the "unequaled master."

Fausto Cacciatori, curator of Cremona's nearby Violin Museum, said the secret was Stradivarius himself, "his extraordinary abilities, his craftsmanship". "He was a man who never stopped experimenting, always searching for the perfect sound."—AFP



British singer Adele Laurie Blue Adkins aka Adele performs on stage during the BRIT Awards 2022 ceremony and live show, in London. — AFP

Hello? Don't throw stuff at us, Adele urges fans

Adele warned her Las Vegas residency audience not to throw things onstage, addressing the spate of recent incidents that saw fans chuck items at artists including Bebe Rexha. Rexha suffered an injury to the eye after a fan threw a phone at her as she performed in New York, while country artist Kelsea Ballerini was hit in the eye by a bracelet thrown by a fan in Idaho.

And in a particularly bizarre incident, a concertgoer tossed a bag containing their mother's ashes onstage where Pink was performing. "This is your mom?" Pink says in videos circulated on social media, before adding: "I don't know how I feel about this." Adele won't be having it, the artist declared in an expletive-laden warning that's spread on social media.

In a fan-video posted to TikTok, the British balladeer said people seem to be "forgetting... show etiquette at the moment." "I... dare you, dare you to throw something at me," she said, albeit with a chuckle. "Stop throwing things at the artist!"—AFP

Alain Delon's children file complaint against assistant

The children of French film legend Alain Delon lodged a police complaint against his live-in assistant on Wednesday on claims of harassment and "threatening" behavior, their lawyer told AFP. Delon, 87, was one of France's biggest film stars at the height of his career, an icon of the 1960s New Wave who appeared in classics such as "The Swimming Pool" and "The Leopard".

The lawyer, Christophe Ayela, said that Delon has been in a weakened condition since a cardio-vascular incident in 2019, prompting the hiring of a woman to assist him at his home in the Loiret region of central France. "She has shown herself to be more and more aggressive,

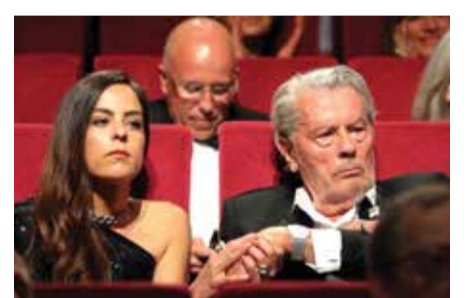
disparaging and offensive towards him and his children," Ayela said.

"I suspect an abuse of frailty, and I am counting on an investigation to establish it." The complaint was lodged by Delon's children Anouchka, Alain-Fabien and Anthony, and the actor added his name via a written declaration. The assistant "systematically monitors his telephone conversations and private messages. She answers in his place, pretending to be him, and she tries to intercept his postal mail," Ayela claimed.

"She is authoritarian, threatening, even going so far as to mistreat Mr Delon's dog in an unacceptable way," he added. Anthony Delon had lodged an

additional complaint with police for "violence towards a vulnerable person," the lawyer told AFP, adding that the woman's alleged behaviour had been going on for at least 18 months.

"On January 31, 2022, I made the decision to start notifying and reporting facts that took place... between my father Alain Delon and his female companion," Anthony Delon said in a statement sent to AFP. Delon rarely appeared on screen after the 1990s. His last major public appearance was to receive an honorary Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 2019.—AFP



File photo shows French actor Alain Delon (right) holds the hand of his daughter French actress Anouchka Delon before being awarded with an Honorary Palme d'Or at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

Hong Kong-American pop singer Coco Lee dies aged 48

Hong Kong-born American pop singer Coco Lee, beloved in Asia for her diva riffs and as the voice of Disney's "Mulan" in Mandarin, died Wednesday, according to an announcement from her family. The 48-year-old had suffered from depression in recent years, "but her condition deteriorated drastically over the last few months", sisters Carol Lee and Nancy Lee said in an Instagram post.

She was hospitalized Sunday after attempting to take her own life, they said. "Despite the best efforts of the hospital team to rescue and treat her from her coma, she finally passed away on 5 July, 2023." Born January 17, 1975, in British-ruled Hong Kong, Lee—who also grew up in California—gained prominence in the 90s for her strong voice, crescendoing vocal riffs and soulful ballads.

Her fluency in Cantonese, Mandarin and English helped Lee access a fan base not only in Hong Kong, mainland China and Taiwan, but also in Southeast Asian countries like Singapore and Malaysia, as well as in Australia. She sang the Mandarin version of the 1998 ballad



Hong Kong-born American pop singer Coco Lee.

"Reflection" from the Disney film "Mulan", and recorded "A Love Before Time" as part of the soundtrack for martial arts film "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" directed by Ang Lee. She performed the Best Original Song-nominated number at the 2001 Academy Awards, making her the first singer of Chinese descent to grace the Oscars stage, according to Warner Music China.

In 1999, Lee debuted her first full English-language album, "Just No Other Way", which featured more R&B-influenced hits like "Do You Want My Love". From that album, "Before I Fall in Love" was chosen as the theme song for the Richard Gere and Julia Roberts rom-com "Runaway Bride". In her final Instagram post, Lee shared tattoos reading "love" and "faith" scrawled on her arms.—AFP

Vietnam 'looking into' Blackpink concert organizer over South China Sea map

Vietnam is investigating "an incident" involving the organizer of a Blackpink concert in Hanoi, the government has said, after social media users complained its website featured a map showing China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. K-pop megastar girl group Blackpink is due to host two concerts in the Vietnamese capital in late July. News of the performance has generated a huge amount of excitement in the city, which rarely hosts big-name international artists.

But early this week, reports surfaced on social media saying iME, a Beijing-based event and entertainment company, used a map on the front page of its official website featuring the "nine-dash line". China has long used the line to illustrate its expansive claims over most of the resource-rich South China Sea, often to the displeasure of Hanoi, which also claims parts of the waterway.

Some Facebook and TikTok users demanded a boycott of the concerts. On the Blackpink Vietnam FC (fan club) Facebook page, one comment read: "In support of Vietnam, we'd better... not attend entertainment shows organized by iME." Another read: "This concerns the territorial claim of a country. Although I like Blackpink, we should raise our voice."

Tickets are due to go on sale on Friday. The ministry of culture and information said Wednesday it was starting "procedures to look into the incident". On Thursday, ministry of foreign affairs spokesperson Pham Thu Hang said she was "aware that relevant authorities were trying to clarify these claims", admitting that Blackpink's Vietnam show had become a "hot-button issue". On Thursday, the company's website was "under maintenance".—AFP



Lifestyle

Paris Fashion Week welcomed its first Saudi designer into the fold on Thursday, with a haute couture show full of daringly revealing looks. Ashi Studio has been a big name in fashion for years, dressing celebrities including Beyonce, Lady Gaga and Deepika Padukone. But Thursday was the first time its founder Mohammed Ashi was included in the official Paris Fashion Week line-up, marking "the peak of his career," he told AFP. Modest and unassuming, he has rarely put his Saudi nationality up front.



Fashion designer Mohammed Ashi poses after his show for the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris.

His designs certainly challenge popular notions of Saudi dress, with highly revealing transparent fabrics, or coiled collars and cutouts that clasped the breasts. "I am a global citizen but I have also always been proud to be Saudi," Ashi said backstage. The show was inspired by perfumes and used organic



Revealing debut for first Saudi in Paris Fashion Week



fabrics that are used to extract the essence from flowers, along with plenty of velvet.

"It's a dark romance story—it's about extracting beauty from deep within and putting it on the outside," Ashi said. It incorporated some of the feathered looks and long silk trains for which he is known. "The first look was a simplified version of what I usually do and often the most simple thing is the most difficult," he said.

"There was a lot of pressure but once that was done, the collection clicked and I could move forward." Ashi has forged his own path, having left Saudi Arabia decades ago to work with international labels before setting up his own in 2007.

But since the social changes in the kingdom under Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, Paris-based Ashi has been welcomed back to mentor young designers as part of plans to develop its own fashion industry. His promotion to fashion's top league is neatly timed as Riyadh announces its own fashion week in October and says new freedoms will boost retail sales to \$32 billion a year. --AFP



Models present creations by Ashi Studio during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week at the Jean-Jacques Henner museum in Paris on Thursday.--AFP photos



Cheesemonger Rachid Ibersiene poses for a picture with his "Tamgout" cheese wheels in a cellar in the village of Tamassit in northern Algeria.



Cheesemonger Rachid Ibersiene stacks fresh wheels of his "Tamgout" cheese in a cellar in the village of Tamassit in northern Algeria.



Cheesemonger Rachid Ibersiene prepares his "Tamgout" cheese in the village of Tamassit in northern Algeria.



This picture shows the village of Tamassit, where cheesemonger Rachid Ibersiene creates his "Tamgout" cheese, in northern Algeria.

Alps to Atlas: Swiss-inspired cheese comes to Algeria mountains

Supporting a white cap and apron, Rachid Ibersiene bustles around vats at his dairy in Algeria's Atlas Mountains where he has brought the tradition of artisanal cheesemaking back from Switzerland. "We started with a butane gas bottle and stove," the cheesemonger said, alluding to the growth of his factory since it opened.

In a matter of 15 years, Ibersiene's "Tamgout" cheese—a blend of the Swiss Gruyere and Dutch Gouda styles—has become a source of honor for the north African country. Both Algerians and foreigners have taken a keen interest in the product, which has a unique taste as it draws on age-old European traditions but is made from Algerian milk. "We were inspired by Vacherin Fribourgeois, adapting the entire tradition to Algerian milk, which is different from Swiss milk," Ibersiene said, referring to a semi-hard Swiss cheese.

"Algerian milk is less uniform and somewhat more organic because the farms are smaller and more diversified. In Switzerland, you don't find farmers with only two or three dairy cows. "Our cheese has a more nuanced taste," the 57-year-old added, describing it as "typically Algerian".

Born to a working-class family in Algiers, Ibersiene studied petroleum engineering but struggled to find a job. After moving to Italy, he tried his luck at filmmaking before relocating again to Switzerland, where he spent 16 years working as a computer consultant.

"That's where the idea of the cheese factory came from," he recalled. "To relax on weekends, I would go up to the mountain chalets in Gruyere where many cheesemakers are located."

'Source of pride'
In 2003, he moved to the area to learn the basics of Swiss cheese production. Three years later, he returned home to set up his own dairy factory in Tamassit at the foot of Mount Tamgout—from which his cheese takes its name. Unable to secure financial backing, Ibersiene used his life savings to fund the project, which required 10 million dinars (over \$73,000) in equip-

ment. Aided by five employees, Ibersiene spends his days inspecting the cellars where the wheels of cheese, which need to be regularly rubbed and turned, are stored.

"The maturation period of Tamgout varies from one month to two years, depending on the taste of the customers," he said. "Our cheese is made from raw cow's milk, without any food additives. It is untreated. We use natural lactic ferments."



Cheesemonger Rachid Ibersiene poses with wheels of his "Tamgout" cheese in the village of Tamassit in northern Algeria.--AFP photos

He receives deliveries of up to 1,000 liters (265 gallons) of cow's milk that produce nearly 50 kilograms (110 pounds) of cheese daily. The factory began turning a profit in 2018.

Initially, Tamgout cheese—featuring the slogan "a Swiss idea, an Algerian cheese"—was sold nationally in supermarkets, but payment issues halted deliveries. Now, it is available at specialty and gourmet shops, and even draws Western expatriates as clients and visitors to his factory. Ibersiene said although he made a better living in Switzerland, his delight from the success of his cheese is priceless. "Customers come from abroad to buy it," including someone from New York, he said. "It's a source of pride because we started from nothing," he added. --AFP



In this photo provided by Rijksmuseum on Thursday, the Cannon of Kandy which originated from Sri Lanka is photographed.

Dutch to return colonial treasures to Indonesia, South Lanka

The Netherlands said Thursday it will hand back hundreds of colonial-era artifacts to Indonesia and Sri Lanka, including a haul of treasure and a gem-encrusted bronze cannon. The decision to return some 478 objects followed recommendations by a government-appointed commission last year looking into illegal Dutch colonial acquisitions now being displayed in museums in the Netherlands. "These recommendations are a milestone in dealing with collections from a colonial context," said Gunay Uslu, Dutch deputy minister for culture, education and science.

The commission was set up after a request by Indonesia for the return of some art pieces and natural history collections by its former colonial ruler the Netherlands. Some of the items to be handed back include the so-called "Lombok treasure" of hundreds of golden and silver objects, looted by the Dutch colonial army after capturing the Cakranegara palace on Indonesia's Lombok island in 1894.

It also included a bronze cannon decorated with silver, gold and precious gems including rubies. The 18th-century "Lewke's cannon" is believed to have been a gift by a Sri Lankan aristocrat called Lewke Disava to the king of Kandy around 1745-46. It is believed to have fallen into Dutch hands in 1765 when Dutch troops led by the governor of Ceylon Lubbert Jan van Eck attacked and conquered Kandy. --AFP

Sports

Wimbledon star Rune 'cool' to wear back-to-front cap

Rune hopes to be Grand Slam champ with lethal groundstrokes

LONDON: If it was good enough for Lleyton Hewitt, it's good enough for Holger Rune, who hopes to become a Grand Slam champion by possessing lethal groundstrokes, an intense competitive spirit—and a back-to-front baseball cap. It may not be the height of sartorial elegance, but 20-year-old Rune will not be swayed by subjective questions of taste when it comes to what he wears on his head.

"When I played my second ATP in Santiago, I had some things in the hair. I didn't really like the style myself," said the Dane after making the second round at Wimbledon. "After that I found it comfortable and nice to wear something. I thought I looked cool with the backwards hat. 'I enjoy to have something on my head. I tried to play without, but then I sweat a lot, so it gets in my eyes.'"

Hewitt, the 2002 Wimbledon champion, was as combative on court as Rune is now, two decades on. When the Australian clinched the 2001 US Open, he did so with his cap resolutely flipped backwards. It was a style he had cultivated in his early teens. When fellow Australian Darren Cahill came across a 12-year-old Hewitt, he asked the youngster to explain why he opted for that particular look.

"He said 'I just like it backwards'. And I said 'Aren't you supposed to wear the peak of the hat to protect your nose and eyes and keep your eyes out of the sun?'," Cahill recalled to the New York Times in 2018. "And he said 'No, I just like it backwards.'" In an online poll by MensTennisForums.com in 2018, 36 percent of respondents voted Hewitt as the "Best player with a backward baseball cap" followed by Germany's Tommy Haas, with just under 33 percent. "What the hell is Denis Shapovalov do-

ing in this poll?" thundered one respondent.

'Just bored I guess'

Three years later, the question was irrelevant when the Canadian ditched the hat for a headband. "The hair always gets in my face. I wanted to cut my hair a bit shorter and just try out the bandana look," said Shapovalov. "I definitely like it. I feel like it's different. I wore a bandana when I was really young, so it's kind of cool to just change it up. I was just bored, I guess." However, at the French Open last month, Shapovalov had reverted to the trusty backwards cap. John Isner is better known at Wimbledon for taking part in the sport's longest-ever match in 2010.

However, last year, his decision to wear his cap back to front against Andy Murray sent social media into meltdown, with critics suggesting it was not a good look for a man of 37. "Isner should lose this match, by default. Purely for having a baseball cap on backwards," wrote one. "I have absolutely no idea who this Isner chap is, probably quite a lovely guy, but seriously, wear your baseball cap like a grown-up or don't wear one at all!" Russia's Karen Khachanov, another back-to-fronter, had to change his cap in a 2021 Wimbledon clash against Shapovalov. The umpire detected that the underside of the cap's peak was too dark, contravening the tournament's all-white clothing policy.

'Rules are rules'

"I think there was a little bit of black colour inside the hat. I don't know if you can really see it from inside," said a weary Khachanov. "But rules are rules, so I changed it." Baseball star Ken Griffey Junior is



WIMBLEDON: Denmark's Holger Rune returns the ball to Britain's George Loffhagen during their men's singles tennis match on the third day of the 2023 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London. — AFP

credited with being the pioneer of the fashion in the 90s. Griffey said he picked up the habit as a child when he would wear his father's hats. They would often slip off so his solution would be to wear them

back to front. Rune hopes the focus at Wimbledon will switch to his tennis rather than what he chooses to pop on his head. "Maybe the next thing will be a banana," he joked. — AFP



World Athletics President Sebastian Coe

World athletics chief blasts 'greenwashing' by politicians

LONDON: World Athletics president Sebastian Coe has criticized politicians for "greenwashing exercises" but said sport can play a key role in tackling climate change during an event at Wimbledon. Coe was speaking at the Environment Positive Panel on Thursday alongside other sports stars including former England football captain Gary Lineker and retired Norwegian golfer Suzann Pettersen. Two-time Olympic gold medalist Coe, who led London's successful bid for the 2012 Games, said: "Sport has the ability to shine a spotlight on things that ministers and politicians just won't touch."

He added: "There can be a continuity through sport and a continued expression of pressure in this space because we're not sitting there thinking about the next four-year electoral cycle. "And, I'm sorry, COP28 (the UN climate change conference later this year), all of them, these are greenwashing exercises." The British former middle-distance star said three-quarters of elite track and field athletes had reported that climate change had already impacted their training and competition programs.

He highlighted soaring temperatures at the US Olympic trials in Oregon in 2021. "We're in the position where probably we're going to have to move at some stage all our road endurance events from the world championships or even an Olympic Games to another time of the year," he said. He added: "We have made a decision that in future we probably won't take our championships into landscapes where air quality falls below a threshold and actually, if I'm being a little closer to home, that would include London."

Coe admitted that balancing human rights and climate change issues would become a greater challenge in the coming decades, with energy-rich states such as Saudi Arabia and 2022 World Cup host Qatar playing a more prominent role. Lineker, who chaired the panel, said football could do much more to adopt greener practices. He said: "There is so much travel involved, so many flights. A lot of footballers and football teams take private jets everywhere... I think private jets should be banned." "Every sport has got to try and do their best but ultimately we know that governments need to take a bigger hand in these things," he added.

Wimbledon protests

The panellists were asked about their reaction to on-court protests at Wimbledon on Wednesday by Just Stop Oil demonstrators. "I don't really agree with their actions but I understand where they are coming from," said Petersen, who is captain of the European Solheim Cup team. Coe urged campaign groups to work with sport to fight for change. "Don't think of us as competitors, think of us as potential collaborators here, use us. Come on board and allow the amplification that our athletes and our federations can give to this," he said. "My message would be 'Come and be part of this with us'. Help us shape this. — AFP

Red Bull set for more records

SILVERSTONE: Many Formula One fans will be recalling the accidental feat of Jean-Louis Schlesser this weekend as Max Verstappen leads Red Bull's assault on one of the sport's oldest records at the British Grand Prix. As the defending double world champion bids to add to his own sequence of five straight wins to boost his runaway lead en route to a third drivers' world title, his team bid for an 11th straight win. If they succeed, they will equal the record set by McLaren in 1988, when the British team boasted a line-up of Alain Prost, who became a four-time champion, and Ayrton Senna, a three-time champion.

Many fancied McLaren to complete the 1988 season unbeaten—as Red Bull bid to be this year—but their ambitions were undone when Senna tangled with a back-marker at the Italian Grand Prix. In his only F1 race start, Frenchman Schlesser, deputizing for the unwell Nigel Mansell with Williams on the eve of his 40th birthday, collided with the race-leading Brazilian with three laps remaining and gifted Ferrari an emotional one-two win just weeks after the death of team founder Enzo Ferrari.

It ended McLaren's dream of invincibility. Such a scenario may be the only hope of preventing Red Bull claiming another win, probably through Verstappen, and gifting another team a taste of the victor's champagne on Sunday. The Dutchman's dominant display last weekend hoisted him 81 points clear of team-mate Sergio Perez in the title race, making a third title appear inevitable, but others believe fate may yet intervene.

'Going to be epic'

"It's going to be epic," said Red Bull team chief Christian Horner, as if sensing the power of the occa-



SPIELBERG BEI KNITTELFELD: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen (center) takes the lead during the Formula One Austrian Grand Prix at the Red Bull race track in Spielberg. — AFP

sion ahead at Silverstone. "But who knows what obstacles there could be? We saw what happened there last year and it's a race we haven't won since, I think, Mark Webber in 2012. So, it's a big race for us on this calendar." After winning 16 of the last 20 races, Verstappen will be brimming with confidence while Ferrari, revived by Charles Leclerc's second-placed finish last Sunday, will hope they can triumph again, one year after their last victory and on a track where Carlos Sainz was successful a year ago.

Despite a dismal display last Sunday, Mercedes' seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton will hope to impress, at least, if not to add to his record eight British victories. Team boss Toto Wolff confirmed the team will have another raft of upgrades on their car this weekend. "We have reasons for optimism," he

said. Hamilton himself hopes one of his fellow-British drivers—team-mate George Russell or McLaren's Lando Norris—will rise and shine in what promises to be a momentous contest.

"George and Lando are both incredibly talented and have a bright future in front of them," said Hamilton, after declaring he had no intention of passing over the baton as top British contender yet. "It is crazy to think that they are as young as they are. Lando is 23 but (it) feels like he has been here for ages, so I am excited to watch their journey and where they get to." The Silverstone-based Aston Martin team's two-time champion Fernando Alonso should not be discounted either, while the race organizers have tightened security following last year's track invasion protest by 'Just Stop Oil' activists. — AFP

Russian ultras set aside skirmishes to fight for Moscow

MARIUPOL: At the main football stadium in Moscow-controlled Mariupol, stickers of the local Ukrainian team are still visible, but armed football ultras from Russia now patrol the stands. The logo of FC Mariupol—a seagull and an anchor on an orange and blue background, with the name of the city spelled in Ukrainian—has been partly scraped off on one dugout. The overgrown stadium has a hole in its roof and bullets litter its athletics track.

A year after the port city fell to Moscow following a brutal siege, the stadium has a huge banner that reads "GLORY TO RUSSIA", with a Russian and Soviet flag flying over it. It has been covered in symbols of Russian football clubs—from Moscow's CSKA to Saint Petersburg's Zenit. They were mostly brought here by football ultras who formed a fighting unit—the "Espanola"—to join Moscow's offensive.

Based in Mariupol, they train on wild beaches on the Azov Sea outside the vastly destroyed city. Inspired by British hooliganism, Russia's ultra scene started in the 1990s and its adherents have a particularly fierce reputation. The members of Espanola say they number around 600. One of them, Mikhail—codename "Pitbull"—said they had put their rivalries from back home aside to fight for Russia.

"In civilian life, we fought each other," the Zenit fan said, holding a kalashnikov and with "Espanola" tattooed on his shaved skull. "But in the trenches, we are shoulder to shoulder." As nationalists that have historically been suspicious of the Kremlin, the fighters insisted to AFP they were fighting for the Russian nation, not the authorities. But not all of Russia's ultra football fans—known for their far-right views—have joined Moscow's ranks. The community was split in 2014 when the conflict between Moscow and Kyiv began—and when some sided with Ukraine.



MARIUPOL: Volunteers of Espanola special force unit, a detachment of Russian football hooligans, have a training session at a training field in undisclosed location outside Mariupol. — AFP

'Radical split'

Driving past rows of destroyed houses as well as estates freshly built by Russia, Andrei, who came from Moscow, said the split was cemented with Russia's full-scale offensive launched last year. "In 2022 it became more radical," the Moscow Spartak fan said. He said he hopes to face off with the Russian football ultras fighting for Kyiv on the battlefield. As they train on white sandy beaches, the unit claims it is being used in offensive and defensive operations—as well as sabotage missions—by the Russian army. Lying on the sand, the fighters—one of them a woman—practice shooting targets in a sniper class. Some of them have insignia with skulls on them, oth-

ers the black-white-yellow Russian imperial flag.

One fighter, 38-year-old Yevgeny from the east Ukrainian city of Gorlivka, claimed that the Russian defense ministry had recognized the battalion's efforts. "The latest weapons come to our detachment from the ministry of defense, because we have proven ourselves very well," he said during the sniper training. Until Gorlivka was taken over by pro-Russia rebels in 2014, he supported FC Shakhtar Donetsk, but turned away from the club after it moved to the western city of Lviv. Wearing a scarf with a skull on it, the football fan turned armed fighter added: "The fact that our guys are all sporty and do not use alcohol—this means we are doing good." — AFP

The NBA draft

In this annual event teams select the best young players

1

The "prospects", are mainly from US high schools, US universities, the G-League (minor league) and foreign championships



2

In front of them, **30** teams have two **two choices**, one per round (in theory)*



3

A **lottery** several weeks earlier determines which teams can make their 1st, 2nd, 3rd or 4th choices and so select the **best players**



4

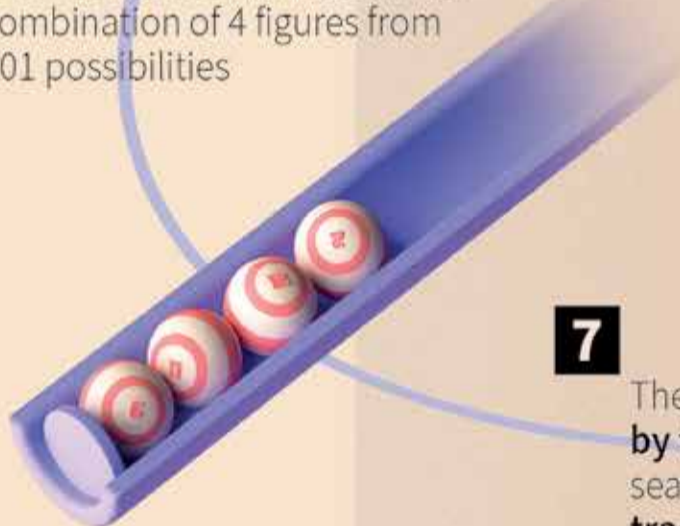
Only the **14** worst teams of the last season can participate in the draw

5

The three teams with the worst record have a 14% chance **to win the lottery**, the 4th worst team has a 12.5%, the 5th 10.5% up to the 14th with a 0.5% chance

6

4 ping pong balls are randomly selected, among the 14 numbered from 1 to 14 for a combination of 4 figures from 1,001 possibilities



7

The rest of the order is largely determined **by the team's ranking** at the end of the season although **teams do sometimes trade draft picks** as part of deals to land better-known senior players

8

The goal: **rebalance team rosters in the NBA**, a closed league that has no promotion or relegation, by assisting those teams at the bottom of the standings



*Only 58 choices in total in 2023 because two teams renounced their choice during the 2nd round due to rule violations

Source: NBA

Giannis undergoes surgery, FIBA WCup in doubt

MIAMI: Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo has had surgery on his left knee, the team confirmed Wednesday, leaving the bas-

ketball star's participation for Greece in August's FIBA World Cup in doubt. "He had a routine surgery on his left knee, and it went great," Bucks head coach Adrian Griffin said on Wednesday. "Everything went as planned, and we expect him back ready to go in training camp," he added. The Bucks are expected to begin their camp in early-to mid-September with the World Cup starting on August 25 and running until September 10.

The Athletic cited a league source as saying that Antetokounmpo's availability for Greece is "in ques-

tion" after what it described as surgery to "clean up loose cartilage in his left knee." The two-time NBA Most Valuable Player suffered a back injury during game one of the Bucks's first-round playoff series against the Miami Heat and did not return until game four. The Bucks, the number one seed in the East, were upset in five by Miami in the best-of-seven series.

The World Cup will be held in the Philippines, Japan and Indonesia. Greece has been drawn in group C with the United States, New Zealand and Jordan. Losing Antetokounmpo would be a

huge blow to Greece's hopes in the tournament. He was top scorer in last year's EuroBasket tournament, averaging 29.3 points although his team went out in the round-of-16 to the Czech Republic. Antetokounmpo was part of the Greece team at the 2019 World Cup which failed to get out of the group stage. The 28-year-old's older brother and Bucks' team-mate Thanasis, is also part of the Greece squad along with his younger brother Kostas, who plays for Greek club Panathinaikos. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
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Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

Change of Name

I, **Nisha D/o Vishwanath R/at D.No. 6-68/8, Maripalla house, Padu Village, Bantwal Dakshina Kannada 574143,** has changed my name as Nisha Vishwanath Ganiga vide affidavit dated 22-04-2023, sworn before notary A.I.Kareem, Mangalore. **(#3825) 07-07-2023**

I, **Fathima Muneeb** holder of Indian Passport No. V1965265, having permanent address 23-2-519/1, Hyderabad, Telangana, India, Pin Code - 500002, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as **Fatima** (given name) and **Ayub Baig** (surname). **(#3824) 06-07-2023**

I **Sabira Banu** holder of Indian Passport No. Z6929011, having permanent address 14, Gali-G, Kharol Colony, Fatehpura, Girwa, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India-313001, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as **Sabira** (Given Name) and **Hita** (Surname). **(#3823) 06-07-2023**

I **Shabbir** holder of Indian Passport No. Z4825725, having permanent address 14, Gali-G, Kharol Colony, Fatehpura, Girwa, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India-313001, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as **Shabbir** (Given Name) and **Hita** (Surname). **(#3823) 06-07-2023**

I myself **Naziya Syed** holding of Indian Passport number U0465194 resident in 2361 Sastrinagar Akkayapalli Kadapa YSR District that I have changed my name Naziya Syed to given name **Naziya** surname **Shaik**. **(#3821) 04-07-2023**

I **Mahboob Basha Syed** holder of Indian Passport No. Z3826892 having permanent address 9 515 6 A Agadi St, Kadapa Dist, Andhra Pradesh, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: **Mahaboob Basha** (given name) and **Syed** (surname). **(#3820) 04-07-2023**

Andreeva books third round

Wawrinka sets up a tasty clash with Djokovic



WIMBLEDON: Russia's Mirra Andreeva returns the ball to Czech Republic's Barbora Krejčíková during their women's singles tennis match on the fourth day of the 2023 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon on July 6, 2023. — AFP

LONDON: Russian 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva reached the third round of a Grand Slam for a second successive time at Wimbledon on Thursday. Andreeva was leading Czech 10th seed Barbora Krejčíková 6-3, 4-0 when the former French Open champion retired with an injury. Just as she had done at the French Open, the teenager came through qualifying for Wimbledon and next faces either compatriot Anastasia Potapova or Kaja Juvan of Slovenia. Making her main draw debut, Andreeva, ranked at 102 in the world, saw off China's Wang Xiyu in the first round in a match that finished late Wednesday. In Paris last month, it took world number seven Coco Gauff to stop her in three sets in the last 32.

Wawrinka advances

Meanwhile, Andy Murray took on Stefanos Tsitsipas in the standout match at Wimbledon on Thursday in a contest with a spicy history after Stan Wawrinka set up a tasty clash with Novak Djokovic. Defending women's champion Elena Rybakina was also in second-round action as tournament chiefs scramble to catch up after rain played havoc with the schedule. Fifth seed Tsitsipas de-

feated two-time Wimbledon champion Murray in a five-set first-round epic which stretched to almost five hours at the US Open in 2021.

Britain's Murray was furious that the Greek took a medical timeout after dropping the third set and then an eight-minute toilet break at the end of the fourth. Former world number one Murray sarcastically tweeted: "Fact of the day. It takes Stefanos Tsitsipas twice as long to go the bathroom as it takes Jeff Bezos to fly into space. Interesting." However, ahead of their clash on Centre Court, Tsitsipas said the two men had buried the hatchet. "I think it has been settled already a long time ago. We had to play Laver Cup together in the same team. I've forgotten about it. He has forgotten about it," he said after seeing off Dominic Thiem in five sets at the All England Club on Wednesday.

'Someone I respect'

"He's someone that I respect. He has done great things in tennis. I'm looking forward to this match." Tsitsipas has never played on Centre Court, where Murray captured the 2013 and 2016 Wimbledon titles. While he had to play his opening match with

Thiem over two days due to the torrential rain that wiped out most of the program on Tuesday, Murray had the advantage of seeing off Ryan Peniston under the Centre Court roof. That gave the 36-year-old an extra day of rest on Wednesday, which could be a factor, even though he is 12 years older than his opponent. There were a clutch of first-round matches on Thursday, including Alexander Zverev's clash against Dutch qualifier Gijs Brouwer.

The chaos means that while men's defending champion Djokovic played his second-round match on Wednesday, top seed Carlos Alcaraz must wait until Friday. Djokovic, chasing a record-equaling eighth men's title, will face Switzerland's Wawrinka, who beat Argentine 29th seed Tomas Martin Etcheverry 6-3, 4-6, 6-4, 6-2. Wawrinka, 38, has won three Grand Slams but he has suffered a series of injury problems in recent years and has slipped to 88th in the rankings.

The Swiss player has beaten Djokovic twice in Grand Slam finals—at the French Open in 2015 and at the US Open the following year. "I will enjoy it if I don't get killed," said Wawrinka. "Novak is an amazing champion. I am happy to get the chance

to play him on grass before I finish my career." Last year's surprise champion Rybakina lost the first set of her title defense against American Shelby Rogers earlier this week but dropped just three games in the next two sets. The Kazakh player, who faces 74th-ranked veteran Alize Cornet in the last 64, admits playing at Wimbledon as the defending champion is a different challenge.

'New chapter'

"Straight away you go to this big court," she said. "I think for me it's now a new chapter and this is something I need to get used to and try to maintain my level." Elsewhere on Thursday, there were early wins for Ukrainian wildcard Elina Svitolina, who beat Belgian 28th seed Elise Mertens 6-1, 1-6, 6-1, and two-time Grand Slam champion Victoria Azarenka. American qualifier Sofia Kenin followed up her shock win against compatriot Coco Gauff by defeating China's Wang Xinyu in straight sets. Polish 17th seed Hubert Hurkacz, who famously beat Roger Federer in the quarter-finals in 2021, saw off British wildcard Jan Choinski 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3). — AFP

Kuwaiti participates in World Gymnastics Championship



Kuwait Gymnastics Team player Noor Al-Rezaihan

KUWAIT: Kuwait Gymnastics Team player Noor Al-Rezaihan is participating in the second World Junior Championships hosted by Romania. She is the first Kuwaiti player to participate in this level, amidst a wide participation from 60 countries. Head of the participating Kuwaiti delegation Salah Askar said that the Kuwait Team player Noor is ready to take on this challenge, noting that she will participate in the two-day tournaments.

The female player has entered an intensive program prior to the championship under the supervision of Ukrainian Coach Irina Kovalchuk, stated Askar, pointing that she is physically fit and fully ready to compete with world champions in the tournaments. Askar praised Coach Irina's efforts in preparing Al-Rezaihan for this championship, affirming Kuwait Gymnastics Federation's confidence in the player. — KUNA

AC Milan and Monza to honor Berlusconi with annual friendly

MILAN: AC Milan and Monza will honour Silvio Berlusconi with an annual friendly named after their deceased former owner, the two Serie A teams announced on Thursday. In a joint statement, the clubs said that the first edition of the Silvio Berlusconi Trophy will be held at Monza's U-Power Stadium on August 8, with the match switching venues each year. "The initiative aims to honor and keep alive the memory of president Silvio Berlusconi, who wrote indelible pages in both clubs' histories," the clubs said.

Former Italian prime minister and media mogul Berlusconi, who died last month aged 86, was an extremely divisive figure in the country's political and cultural spheres. But his enormous success as a club owner earned him the admiration of legions of fans. He reigned supreme at Milan from 1986 until 2017, buying an ailing club on the brink of bankruptcy and turning them into titans of the European game. During his time at the San Siro Milan won 29 trophies, including five Champions League and eight Serie A titles.

After selling Milan for 740 million euros he picked up Monza, then in the third tier, for a relative song in 2018 through his holding company Fininvest and alongside long-time ally Adriano Galliani took them up to Serie A. Monza finished 11th last season, their first ever in the top flight of Italian football, but Berlusconi's death has led to speculation that Fininvest could sell the club. On Thursday Berlusconi's eldest son Pier Silvio said "we children will find a way to best keep dad's dream alive", adding that Galliani



MILAN: A pedestrian walks past a mural painting made by Italian artist and activist Alessandro Palombo, depicting the late Italy's former prime minister and media mogul Silvio Berlusconi, in Milan. — AFP

would be "at the centre" of the club's future.

Sources told AFP on Thursday that Pier Silvio and his sister Marina Berlusconi would take joint control of Fininvest following the reading of his will. The pair, who are children of Silvio Berlusconi's first wife Carla Dall'Oglio and until now held 7.65 percent in Fininvest, will according to the source increase their joint stake to 5.3 percent. — AFP

Kuwaitis grab medals at Pan Arab Games

ALGIERS: Yaqoub Al-Yoha and Issa Al-Zankawi each won silver medals for Kuwait in men's athletics with Madhawi Al-Shemmeri - clinching a bronze in women's athletics on day one of the Pan Arab Games in Algeria's coastal city of Oran. Al-Yoha, in the 110m hurdles race, was locked in fierce competition with Amine Bouanani, only losing out to the Algerian in the final third. Kuwaitis maintained a decent showing as Al-Zankawi won the country's second silver in the men's discus throw with Madhawi Al-Shemmeri taking home a bronze in the women's 100m sprint. A total 32 men and women are competing in the 15th edition of the regional competition, across six different sports. — KUNA

