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European envoy blasts Zionist entity over deadly Jenin raid

UN officials make plea for funds to help rebuild refugee camp

JENIN: A European envoy blasted the Zionist entity Saturday over the "proportionality" of the force it uses, as international envoys toured Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank following this week's deadly raid. His remarks echoed UN chief Antonio Guterres who on Thursday told reporters "there was an excessive force used by (Zionist) forces" in its 48-hour operation, the largest the Zionist entity has staged in the Palestinian territory for years. It included air strikes and armored bulldozers ripping up streets.

European Union representative to the Palestinian territories Sven Kuehn von Burgsdorff made his comments as he led a delegation of UN officials and diplomats from 25 countries to the camp in the northern West Bank. "We are concerned about the deployment of weaponry and weapons systems which question the proportionality of the military during the operation," Kuehn von Burgsdorff said of the operation in which 12 Palestinians and one Zionist soldier were killed.

"This cycle of violence has to end, it cannot continue. If there is no political solution to the conflict, we are going to stand here in a week's time, in a month's time, in a year's time, with nothing changed," he added. As the delegation toured the camp, residents peered out of holes left in the walls by Zionist rockets, and local authorities tested a new camp-

wide alarm system to warn of future raids.

Jenin camp has been the site of several large-scale raids by the Zionist military this year, but this week's was the biggest such operation in the West Bank since the second Palestinian "intifada" or uprising of the early 2000s. The camp's infrastructure was severely damaged during the raid. Eight kilometers of water pipes and three kilometers of sewage pipes were destroyed, the UN said. More than 100 houses were damaged and a number of schools were also lightly damaged.

The refugee camp is one of the poorest and most densely populated in the West Bank, with some 18,000 people living in just 0.43 sq km. UN officials on Saturday made a plea for funds to help rebuild the camp. "To restore services and scale up support to the children, we need cash ... our appeal is desperately underfunded," Leni Stenseth, deputy commissioner-general of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), said. "I would urge you to consider announcing your support for the work we are going to do here in Jenin camp in the coming weeks and months as soon as possible," she added.

On Thursday, Algeria announced \$30 million to "help rebuild the Palestinian city of Jenin after the barbaric and criminal attack" by the Zionist entity, and the United Arab Emirates, which normalized ties with the Zionist entity in 2020, said Wednesday it "will provide \$15 million". — AFP



JENIN: Members of an international delegation of envoys look at rubble during a tour of the Jenin camp for Palestinian refugees in the Zionist-occupied West Bank on July 8, 2023. — AFP

Sheikh Talal Al-Fahad elected OCA President

KUALA LUMPUR/KUWAIT: Sheikh Talal Al-Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was elected as the new President of the Olympic Council of Asia during the council's 42nd general assembly held in Bangkok on Saturday. Sheikh Talal won the election after tough competition with Secretary General of the Kuwait Olympic Committee Husain Al-Musallam.



Sheikh Talal Al-Fahad Al-Sabah

The 54-year-old, son of the first OCA president Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, beat OCA Director General Musallam 24-20, OCA said in a statement. Musallam is also President of World Aquatics. Sheikh Talal succeeds his brother Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, who led the organization from 1991 to 2021 before stepping down.

Former secretary general Randhir Singh of India had led the OCA as its acting president since 2021. "I will follow the lead of my father and brother," Sheikh Talal told the delegates after his victory. "We have been with Asia for more than 40 years. I promise you I will unite Asia again," he added. Sheikh Talal takes over ahead of this year's Asian Games in Hangzhou, China from Sept 23. Sheikh Talal also pledged to open a new chapter in the history of Asian Olympics. "A page was folded today and a new one was opened," the eminent Kuwaiti sports personality told the general assembly of the council. Sheikh Talal proposed to name

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MoI: Document forgers detained

KUWAIT: The interior ministry has busted a gang counterfeiting official documents for the Filipino community in Kuwait. The ministry said in a statement that the counterfeiters had been apprehended upon guidelines by Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ah-

mad Al-Sabah to clamp down on any violators of the country's laws.

Personnel of the ministry's department of combating counterfeiting succeeded, in collaboration with the ministry of foreign affairs and the Philippine Embassy, in arresting 33 Filipinos who issued fraudulent documents for members of the community, such as study certificates, marriage contracts and driving permits. They have been referred to relevant authorities for further legal procedures against them.

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KUWAIT: The suspects arrested for forging documents.

Zelensky hails 'brave' Ukraine on 500th day of war

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed "brave" Ukraine on the 500th day of Russia's invasion on Saturday, as the war's toll mounted with eight deaths reported in Russian rocket fire. Zelensky published on social media an undated video clip of a visit to Snake Island in the Black Sea — a symbol of Ukraine's defiance against Russia. "Today we are on Snake Island, which will

never be conquered by the occupiers, like the whole of Ukraine, because we are the country of the brave," he said.

"I want to thank from here, from this place of victory, each of our soldiers for these 500 days," he said in the video, which showed him arriving on the island by boat and leaving flowers. The UN has documented 9,000 civilian deaths since the start of the war on Feb 24, 2022, including 500 children, although it estimates the real toll could be significantly higher.

That toll went up again on Saturday as Ukraine's interior ministry said eight people were killed and 13 injured by Russian rocket fire in the eastern

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In this photograph released on July 8, 2023, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky leaves a message on a sign reading "Snake Island" during his visit there. — AFP

Milestone hailed as US destroys its last chemical weapons

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden announced Friday that the United States has fully destroyed its decades-old stockpiles of chemical weapons, a milestone hailed as completing the elimination around the world of all known stores of the agents of mass death. "Today, I am proud to announce that the United States has safely destroyed the final munition in that stockpile — bringing us one step closer to a world free from the horrors of chemical weapons," Biden said.

The United States was the last of the signatories of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which came into effect in 1997, to complete the task of destroying their "declared" stockpiles, though some states are believed to maintain secret reserves of chemical weapons. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons called the milestone a "historic success" of disarmament, more than one century after the uncontrolled use of chemical gases during World War I produced mass deaths and maiming of troops.

The US announcement meant that all the world's declared chemical weapons stockpiles were "verified as irreversibly destroyed," the OPCW said. "I congratulate all States Parties, and the United States of America in this instance, on this major achievement for the international community," said OPCW Director-General Fernando Arias. Biden said it was the

first time "an entire category of declared weapons of mass destruction" has been verified as destroyed.

The announcement came after the Blue Grass Army Depot, a US Army facility in Kentucky, recently completed its four-year job of eliminating some 500 tons of lethal chemical agents, the last batch held by the US military. The US had held for decades stores of artillery projectiles and rockets that contained mustard gases, VX and sarin nerve agents, and blister agents. Such weapons were condemned widely after their use with horrendous results in World War I.

They were not used significantly in World War II, but many countries retained and further developed them in the years afterward. The most prominent use since the 1970s was Iraq's nerve gas attacks on Iran during their war in the 1980s.

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Local

Kuwait's massive archaeological potential remains largely untapped

Heritage sites endangered by development projects unless care is exercised



KUWAIT: Greek archaeologists during an expedition in Failaka uncover the Hellenic castle which dates back between 323 and 146 BC in this file photo. — KUNA photos



An Italian excavations team works during an expedition in Failaka.

By Khaled Al-Abdulhadi

KUWAIT: Kuwait is a site of hidden archeological treasures that could help establish the country's true heritage and give it a cultural presence, which will add to its identity and further establish its place in the world as a sovereign nation. In Kuwait, excavations started in 1957, when the British administrator at the time invited a Danish exploration mission to Failaka Island.

Archeology is a field which excavates and studies ancient artifacts that belong to any given region. The Middle East and more specifically the Fertile Crescent is one of the oldest continuously inhabited areas in the world, which means that it is a region incredibly rich with artifacts that have yet to be discovered. The importance of archeology should not be underestimated, as it could largely improve tourism in the country, which can in turn benefit the economy.

Tourism is known to be an important factor that contributes to the country's GDP. Furthermore, almost all countries with the largest revenues from tourism have a well-established collection of archeological discoveries spread across their many museums. In fact, museums see this as an incredibly important addition, and go to the extent of excavating sites in other countries to bring back artifacts to display in their museums. Countries are willing to trade these discoveries as well.

Kuwait is largely underrated in the amount of archeological finds it contains, which have existed for thousands of years, from before the start of the Sumerian civilization, the first civilization in the world, with the Ubaid culture, until the many historical periods encompassing the Dilmun civilization, to the times of Alexander the Great in Failaka, to the early Islamic period in Kadima near what is now Jah-



One of the artefacts uncovered in Subiya is seen in this photo.

ra, to the Abbasids during the Islamic Golden Age and many more, given its proximity to the important basin of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, as well as being a stop for Makkah-bound pilgrims coming from the east.

Dr Majed Al-Mutairi attests to this in his PhD thesis. "Kuwait was not isolated in the past, but it had many ongoing and established relationships with other regions," he wrote. There is an argument to be made that despite its size, the land underneath Kuwait contains many hidden treasures that should be discovered and displayed to the world, given its strategic location in the Old World, linking the Far East with Europe.

"From an archaeological perspective, Kuwait has not yet been fully explored. Although we have found



A prehistoric sculpture found during an expedition in Failaka is seen in this photo.

many important archaeological locations, there are still more exciting sites to be discovered," Mutairi added in his thesis. Moreover, according to excavations in 2018-19 conducted by the Kuwait-Georgian archeological mission and published by Wiley Online Library, "the largest proportion of archeological evidence dates back to the Islamic period, as the society was connected to fishing, stock-farming and agriculture." Two water collection systems were identified — shallow filtration well pits and an underground water collection system within settlements in Failaka.

Therefore, it is important to have further excavations in these areas to add to Kuwait's heritage. These sites are also in danger, since there are ongoing plans to develop areas that are rich in archeological sites, such as Subiya, Failaka and others as



This photo shows an arial view of an archaeological site in Subiya.

part of the New Kuwait 2035 vision. However, these developments are important to Kuwait's future and vital to the country's efforts to diversify its economy and ensure a sustainable future. These should not stop, but the government needs to take great care in infrastructure works, as these sites could be of vital importance to the cultural heritage of Kuwait.

Kuwait, given its strategic location throughout history, has been an area of various interactions between cultures that resulted in an incredible number of archeological sites that have not yet been discovered. Further discoveries will add to Kuwait's cultural heritage, while Kuwait will also gain financially from the improvement of its existing museums and influx of tourism as well as boosting its tourism industry, which it presently lacks.



KUWAIT: A pile of trash is seen on a side walk in Kuwait in this file photo. Amendments to Kuwait Municipality's hygiene regulations include a section on recycling and an increase to fines. —KUNA

Hygiene regulations passed to council; EPA raids Jleeb

KUWAIT: Government officials have issued four citations for infringement on Kuwait's environmental protection law in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area, the Environment Public Authority said in a statement.

An inspection team, including officials from the Ministry of Interior represented by the Environment Police, Kuwait Municipality, the Ministry of Electricity, Water and Renewable Energy and the Public Authority for Manpower, raided the area following complaints alerting them to the violations.

The infringements were related to poor storage as well as the existence of illegal connections on rain networks. The environment authority said it would take the necessary measures towards those who breached laws protecting state property.

The raids come as part of intensified campaigns carried out by the environment authority in different parts of Kuwait, including beaches.

Focus on recycling

In other news, Kuwait Municipality's joint legal, finance and environmental affairs committee said it finally finished revising a draft amendment to the hygiene and waste transfer regulations following 14 meetings on the topic. The regulations will be dis-

ussed at the Municipal Council meeting this Monday. Committee Member Sharifa Al-Shalfan said the new regulations, which include adding a section that tackles waste treatment and recycling, are an important step forward.

The regulations also add the requirement of sorting of waste at the source for the first time in Kuwait. "Sorting at the source will support the recycling system and contributes to reducing the amount of waste in landfills," she said.

"With the amendments, we are beginning to address Kuwait's hygiene file."

The committee has also updated the fines imposed on violators, which have been in effect since 2008, to range between KD 100 to KD 1000.

Head of the committee Alia Al-Farsi said the new regulations are only part of a larger system which needs to be further developed to improve the level of hygiene in the country.

"The hygiene file in the country is a file where many entities overlap and is not limited to Kuwait Municipality," said Head of the committee Alia Al-Farsi.

"Hygiene is a social responsibility, beginning with its smallest unit, the family, which plays an important part in improving the existing situation. Authorities should be continuously and clearly raising awareness of the issue."

Farsi emphasized the role that developing and monitoring hygiene contracts and restructuring the municipality to include a department specialized in recycling management would have in raising the level of hygiene in the country. —Agencies

Parliamentary committee to propose law for tackling housing crisis

KUWAIT: A parliamentary committee is proposing a law that will regulate the formation of new companies specialized in the construction of residential cities to resolve housing supply shortages, the committee said in a statement on social media.

"Parliament has accepted to endorse a new law permitting the creation of companies to build new residential cities and other housing complexes for citizens to contribute to tackling housing problems," the parliamentary housing committee said in a statement. The committee discussed the draft law last week and said "agreed on the wording of the parliamentary proposal" with government officials, including the municipal, finance and housing ministers.

A meeting will be held next week for the committee to vote on the final version of the proposal before presenting it to the National Assembly for endorsement in its earliest coming session, the statement said. "This law is one of the main developmental laws that will help in comprehensively addressing the housing issue," said the committee.

The statement did not provide further details on the projects but said the Public Authority for Housing Welfare would be charged with allocating land plots for those projects in various parts of Kuwait.

A call for resolving Qairawan project

The committee has also addressed in its meeting the status of housing projects in South Qairawan and Sulaibiya. "The committee rejects the vague mechanism by which the government has been dealing with the issue, specifically older applications (for land plots)," said the statement.

It called on the government to utilize land in these areas in the best possible way which serves housing needs. The South Qairawan project has been the center of controversy since at least last year, when the housing ministry announced that it was planning for the development of 2,000 plots for citizens despite claims from the environment authority that the area is inhabitable.

The environment authority had expressed concerns regarding the presence of two farms with over 80,000 trees in the area which will hinder development and require special care to protect from damage. In December 2022, the previous government had pledged to move the project to the housing authority within three months, but the promise didn't materialize. The parliamentary committee said in its statement that it "insists on the need to resolve the file so that families can make the appropriate decision (on whether to apply for housing in other areas), especially considering the ongoing land distributions in the South Saad Al-Abdullah area."

It added that current Housing Minister Faleh Al-Ruqabah has now pledged to assign the housing authority to meet and coordinate with the Public Authority for Agriculture and Fisheries Affairs and the environment authority to discuss the best ways to deal with the trees located in the area and the possibility of increasing the announced numbers of housing units. The government agencies will also set dates for distributing the plots, the minister said. They will submit a report to the committee within the coming weeks.

The committee stressed the need to begin distributing plots in these areas as soon as they're ready without linking them to each other and transparently announcing their exact numbers and expected distribution dates so that housing applicants do not get stuck while waiting and lose chances of applying to for housing in new areas such as South Saad Al-Abdullah.



KUWAIT: This file photo shows residential and investment buildings in Kuwait. The parliamentary housing committee is proposing a law to regulate establishing companies specialized in the construction of residential cities.

Local

Women likelier to have poor outcomes from heart disease

Menopause triggers onset of cardiovascular disease risk factors

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times delved into the differences in cardiovascular health between males and females and sudden heart failure among people, including youth, during an interview with Dr Abdullah Esmail, Canadian and American board certified doctor in cardiology and interventional and structural catheterization.

Kuwait Times: Are there any differences in the prevalence of coronary artery disease between men and women?

Dr Abdullah Esmail: Coronary artery disease (CAD) is not just a "man's disease", and its effect on women tends to be riddled with misunderstandings. Women are just as likely as men to develop CAD; however, in women, CAD usually develops seven to 10 years later in life compared to men. Menopause seems to trigger a host of risk factors, including weight gain, higher blood pressure and unfavorable changes in cholesterol levels.

KT: Are there differences in the symptoms experienced by men and women during a heart attack?

Dr Esmail: Chest pain or discomfort is the most common symptom of a heart attack for both men and women. However, women are more likely than men to have additional symptoms as well, such as nausea and shortness of breath. Chest pain can take various forms, such as chest pressure, tightness, squeezing or burning, discomfort in your chest, shoulders, arms, back or jaw, pain that travels down one or both arms

and shortness of breath. Other symptoms include unusual or extreme tiredness, feeling dizzy or light-headed, nausea or vomiting, cold sweat and anxiety.

KT: Are there disparities in cardiovascular outcome based on gender?

Dr Esmail: Women tend to have poorer cardiovascular outcomes than men due to a multitude of factors, including underuse of evidence-based medical therapies, delays in presentation, diagnosis and treatment, and lack of gender-specific data regarding the appropriate treatment of coronary artery disease in women.

KT: Are there variations in the risk factors for heart disease between genders?

Dr Esmail: Traditional risk factors for heart disease and stroke are similar in men and women; this includes smoking, having high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes, not exercising routinely or sitting for long periods of time, eating a diet high in processed foods, salt, saturated fats, cholesterol and added sugars, being overweight or obese, family history of early heart disease and older age. Race, such as being black or South Asian is also linked with a higher risk.

Diabetes, mental stress or depression, obesity and smoking tend to play a bigger role in the development of CAD in women when compared to men. Heart disease can happen at any age, but it tends to increase in women around or after menopause. Other female-specific risks known to increase the likelihood of heart disease include having started menstruating before 10 or after 17 years of age, having health problems during pregnancy, such as



Dr Abdullah Esmail

hypertensive disorders or gestational diabetes during pregnancy, preterm delivery, polycystic ovarian syndrome (many ovarian cysts) and oral birth control.

It is also a concern if you smoke, have spontaneous coronary artery dissection (SCAD) or autoimmune diseases such as lupus (SLE) or rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

KT: Are there any gender-specific preventive measures or interventions that can be taken to reduce the risk of heart disease?

Dr Esmail: Protecting the heart by controlling the risk factors, ie, hypertension, diabetes or high cholesterol. Adopting heart-healthy habits, such as exercising, eating right, getting enough rest and not smoking, is equally important in men and women. However, what is specific for women is that they are natural caretakers. Whether she is as a mother, sister, daughter or wife, women are often so busy caring for everyone else that their health and well-being slip to the bottom of the list. So, remember to take care of your health to be able to take care of others.

KT: What is sudden arrhythmic death syndrome (SADS) that causes sudden death in



youngsters? Are there any symptoms that can alert us to SADS?

Dr Esmail: Sudden arrhythmic death syndrome is when someone dies suddenly and unexpectedly from a cardiac arrest, but the cause of the cardiac arrest cannot be found. A cardiac arrest is when your heart suddenly stops pumping blood around your body. SADS usually happens when an abnormal heart rhythm leads to cardiac arrest. It is usually caused by a heart condition that affects the heart's electrical system — these conditions are caused by changes in one or more of our genes. Unfortunately, most of these conditions have no "alarming signs or symptoms". The most important thing to do is to seek medical advice regarding screening and genetic testing if you have a relative who suffered from SADS to prevent another event in the family.

The leading and effective role of women of Kuwait

KUWAIT: Kuwait's women have been playing, throughout history, a leading and effective role in the country's development in all fields. They have overcome challenges and achieved outstanding successes that enabled them to obtain leadership roles regionally and internationally. They carried on with their role in building the society until they obtained their political rights on May 16, 2005, when they ran for and got elected to the National Assembly in 2006 for the first time.

In 2008, some 27 women ran in the National Assembly election, which helped them gain experience to win seats in the National Assembly election in 2009. Dr Maasouma Al-Mubarak, Dr Salwa Al-Jassar, Dr Aseel Al-Awadhi and Dr Rola Dashti won in the 2009 parliament election, which was a great event in Kuwait.

As Kuwaiti women continue to play their role in society, they have had clear imprints in the public and private sectors and have proven their effective and vital presence in the development process, in particular the 2035 New Kuwait vision. Over the years, Kuwaiti women's gains have increased year after year, witnessing jumps in the percentage of women leaders to reach 21 percent, while Kuwaiti women constitute 59 percent of the country's workforce, higher than the global average of 39 percent.

The constitutional foundations are an important factor that has helped Kuwaiti women achieve their gains, as the constitution does not discriminate between women and men in obtaining rights, as well as Kuwait's commitment to implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which it acceded in 1994, as well as a set of national legislation aimed at supporting and promoting and protecting their rights.



Alia Johar



Amal Al-Abdulkarim



Bedour Al-Sumait



Maali Al-Asousi



Maha Al-Baghli

Maha Al-Baghli, Municipality Councilmember, said: "Kuwaiti women have joined all fields and got leading posts in the private and public sectors." Amal Al-Abdulkarim said: "Over the decades, Kuwaiti women have played important roles in the development of the country as well as the maintenance and strengthening of security in times of peace and war, proving their ability to face challenges and difficulties to be an active partner in building Kuwait."

Abdulkarim said history does not overlook the role of Kuwaiti women during the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990, as they proved their role as resistance fighters alongside men and martyrs whose souls paid the price for the liberation of Kuwait. "The march continued in the post-liberation phase and its role in extinguishing burning oilwell fires and the advancement of women, including the remarkable contribution of Sarah Akbar in this matter. Kuwaiti women were able to consolidate their position among the women of Arab societies, as they gained leadership

and precedence regionally as well as globally by assuming various positions in various leadership, economic, cultural, political and administrative fields," she clarified.

Meanwhile, Maali Al-Asousi, a humanitarian advisor, said: "Kuwait's women have a key role in the society and effective contributions to voluntary and humanitarian action. The recent efforts were their participation in combating the coronavirus. Economic and political freedom helped Kuwait's women obtain the most leading posts in the state."

Alia Johar, a media person, stressed the significant role of Kuwaiti women in enriching literature in the Arab world, referring to several contributions by Kuwaiti women in the media, despite challenges to prove their excellence and be effective in varied media outlets.

Finally, Bedour Al-Sumait, head of the Business and Professional Women's Federation, said: "The country's leadership has backed and encouraged women to practice their effective role and achieve comprehensive development. This helped them obtain several leading and administrative positions in the country, in addition to judicial, military, economic and diplomatic institutions." She said that women's media career is full of achievements despite their struggles to become active in various print, visual and audio media, as they put their mark in preparing programs with professionalism and credibility. — KUNA

OPEC chief lauds Kuwait's participation in energy symposium

VIENNA: Secretary-General of OPEC Haitham Al-Ghais spoke highly of Kuwait's active participation in the eighth Vienna energy symposium recently organized by the bloc. Speaking to KUNA, Gais praised participation of Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Economic and Investment Affairs Saad Al-Barrak in the symposium and its ministerial session, which focused on raising output capacity through increasing investment. Gais further expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Information for its effective partaking to cover this international event organized by OPEC every three years. He stressed the importance of the seminar, which gathered together energy decision-makers from varied countries all over the world to discuss the best ways to address challenges facing this sector. OPEC periodical data underlines the necessity of energy investment worth USD 12 trillion as of now and until 2045 that includes exploration, production, refining, petrochemicals, and transport and shipping, Gais said.



Haitham Al-Ghais

40 percent investment gap
OPEC encourages investment, which has great importance, he added, noting that OPEC member states play their role in this regard. Global economy will have doubled and population will have increased by 1.5 billion by 2045, he made clear. OPEC chief warned against energy poverty facing millions who do not have the simplest methods of energy and electricity. Consequently, he stressed the significance of investment to meet demands for energy supplies at reasonable prices.

Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Oil Minister Dr Saad Al-Barrak said had told media on the sidelines of the meeting that the world currently needs annual investments worth \$500 billion in the energy field. Kuwait, he said, invested more than \$300 billion in energy until 2040.

The minister added that in 2022, the world only invested \$300 billion leaving an over 40 percent gap, thus creating difficulties in the global energy market. He urged a greater increase in the volume of these investments to protect from price fluctuations and to achieve stability in the global economy. Kuwait and other OPEC member states have made many sacrifices to control and determine production levels according to market needs and to prevent price fluctuations in order to serve the interests of oil producing and consuming countries, he added.

Oil not to blame for pollution
In his interview with KUNA, Gais referred to the OPEC oil ministers' meeting held on the sidelines of the symposium as an opportunity to maintain communication amongst OPEC and non-OPEC member states. He indicated that the seminar featured a large number totaling 950 participants who stressed their interest in energy. All agree that energy crisis can not be addressed by only one solution, he said, signaling that the world is talking about gradual transformation in energy use. He finally criticized those who said that oil producers are responsible for environment pollution. He proved that there are some OPEC members, which pay much attention to reduce emission in oil output and refining. — KUNA



ROME: This photo shows the image (Dominant) for which Kuwaiti photographer Mohammed Murad won the judges' choice award in the birds category. — KUNA photos



This photo shows the image (Escape) for which Kuwaiti photographer Mohammed Murad won the judges' choice award in the other animals category.

Kuwaiti lensman wins 2 awards for nature photography

ROME: Kuwaiti photographer Mohammed Murad won two awards at the International Oasis Nature Photography Competition in Ruero, northern Italy, among a group of professional and amateur photographers from nearly 70 countries. The Italian Society for Natural Tourism, which hands out the award, said on Thursday: "The international jury selected the 100 most beautiful photos for 2022 among 25,000 shots by photographers from 69 countries competing for the competition in its 15th year."



Kuwaiti photographer Mohammed Murad

Ruero in the province of Piedmont, classified as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO," a statement by the society said.

"Kuwaiti photographer Mohammed Murad won the judges' choice award in the category (birds) for his image (Dominant). He also won the honorary mention award in the category (other animals) for his image (Escape). The awards are considered as the Oscars of nature photography. The jury handed the awards in a special ceremony in the city of Bra on the hills of picturesque

It explained that there were 10 winning photos for each of the 10 sections of the competition, namely mammals, birds, other animals, landscapes, plant world, underwater world, comic story, art and nature, photojournalism and people. Murad expressed his great pride as a Kuwaiti artist in this important appreciation, which enriched his creative experience and added a new medal to his impressive creative career that confirms Kuwait's presence in the field of nature photography worldwide.

The Kuwaiti photographer and telecommunications engineer said: "Participation in this prestigious international competition, in which international photographers are keen to participate due to its great contribution to preserving the environment as well as supporting global environmental programs and projects, contributes to raising the name of Kuwait in international forums within this artistic and media field." — KUNA

News in Brief

Commerce ministry cracks
down on retail stores

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Mohammad Al-Aiban directed inspection and control teams to intensify their field tours to confront any unjustified increase in prices. Emergency teams in Jahra, Farwaniya, Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer have issued 47 violations against retail stores in the four governorates. The ministry urges citizens and residents to submit any reports or complaints regarding prices and any other commercial violations through the Sabel application. All reports of violations will be followed up continuously around the clock, the ministry said in a statement. People can report stores that refuse to give a receipt, fail to comply with return policies or type the receipt exclusively in English, among other violations.

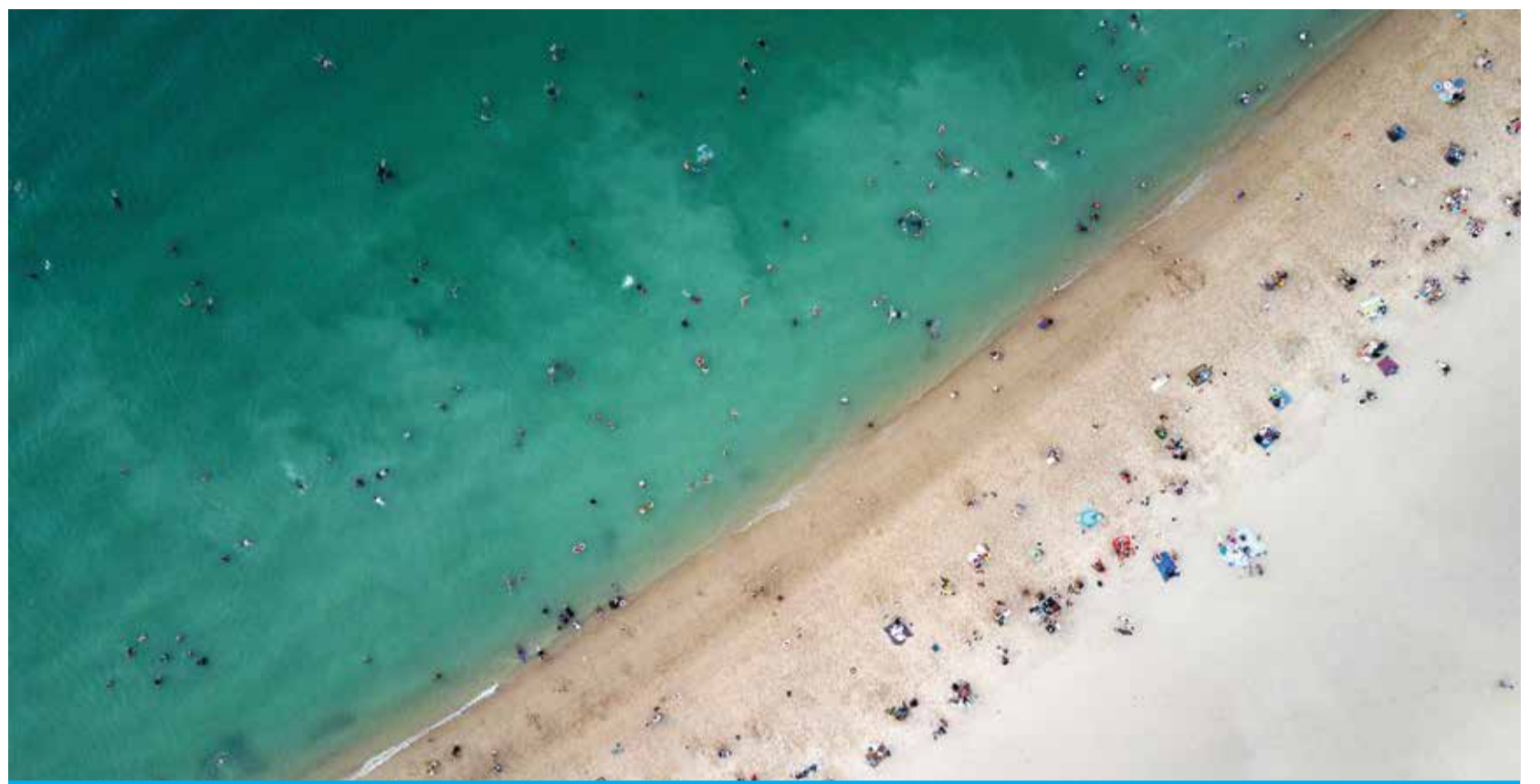
Prosecution refers suspects in
Mubarak Al-Rashidi case to court

KUWAIT: The public prosecution decided to refer two men, a citizen and a resident, to the Criminal Court on charges of kidnapping Mubarak Al-Rashidi, detaining him in cases other than those approved by law, premeditated murder and possession of narcotic substances with the intention of trafficking and abuse. The case has preoccupied Kuwaiti public opinion since Rashidi went missing in the Kabd region last March. Officers from the Criminal Security Sector found Rashidi's body in Salmi desert area after a long search operation lasting 74 days. The investigation was carried out in cooperation with Egyptian authorities, who first arrested the Egyptian national who was later deemed an accomplice.

Body found in Khaitan
24 hours after death

KUWAIT: The body of a man was found in the yard of an abandoned building in Khaitan, with signs of violence on the head. "More than 24 hours have passed since the man's death, and the prosecution was informed of the existence of criminal suspicion," a security source said. Forensic personnel were at the scene to find more information about the case and remove the body.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: An aerial picture shows people at Marina Crescent in Salmiya trying to escape the heat on July 7, 2023. Temperatures reached 50 degrees Celsius over the weekend. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Multidisciplinary MoH team to support healthy ageing for elderly

MoH campaign to evaluate condition of elderly, devise plan to address risks

KUWAIT: The Department of Health Services for the Elderly at the Ministry of Health announced the launch of an educational campaign on Sunday aimed at raising awareness of the (Integrated Care for the Elderly) program in six hospitals across governorates in Kuwait.

The WHO Integrated Care for the Elderly Program is a health care program for people over the age of 65 and aims to support the autonomy of the elderly in society. The program is based on a simple but practical model, as it includes screening for specific indicators to assess the health and community care needs of older adults to develop their own care plan.

It is also based on the recognition that as people get older their subjective capacity (the sum of their physical and mental abilities) tends to decrease while their health problems can become chronic and complex.

The Director of the Department Dr

Fatima bin Dhafari, stressed on Saturday the importance of the campaign in educating the community about the Integrated Care Program for the Elderly. The campaign will have a multidisciplinary team that aims to support healthy ageing in terms of physical, psychological and social health to ensure a decent life for the elderly with continuous autonomy and productivity.

It will begin at Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, followed by the Amiri Hospital, Jahra Hospital, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital and finally Farwaniya Hospital, for three days each. The campaign concludes its activities at Al-Adan Hospital on August 15, Bin Dhafari said.

She explained that through the program, "risks related to ageing in the elderly will be identified and addressed. The condition of the elderly and their physical and mental performance abilities will be evaluated. Then, an individual plan will be designed for each elderly to help them in



KUWAIT: A nurse checks on an elderly patient in this file photo. —KUNA

the event of any deficiency or decline in these abilities."

The integrated health services provided include health promotion, disease prevention, diagnosis and

treatment, disease management, rehabilitation and palliative care services. All services will be managed across different levels of care and according to patients' needs, she added. —KUNA



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KFAS executive science managers program to build youth STEM skills

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) announced on Sunday, the launch of the Executive Science Managers program directed to the secondary stage for the 2023 season, in partnership with Kuwait University, which will continue until July 19 at the College of Life Sciences in Sabah Al-Salem University City (Al-Shadadiya).

Acting Director of the Scientific Culture Department at the Foundation, Dr Laila Al-Mousawi, said on Saturday: "The program aims to motivate students from the ninth to the twelfth grade to pay attention to the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and enhances the capabilities of scientific communication and the dissemination of scientific knowledge in the school and society."

The program consists of several lectures, scientific workshops, seminars and visits that will contribute to allowing the voice of students to be heard in addition to building their capabilities as leaders in various fields of science, especially the future professional culture in the fields of STEM.

She added that a delegation from Rubu' Qarn Foundation for Creating Leaders and Innovators, which was announced in September 2016 under the directives of Sheikha Jawaher Al Qasimi, President of Rubu' Qarn Foundation for Creating Leaders and Innovators, will participate in the current season, which is the first Emirati, Arab and regional institution that aims to build an Emirati generation capable of leading and influencing the future committed to its national identity.

She stressed that the participation of students



from the secondary stage comes with the aim of enriching the program (Executive Science Managers) and promoting the principles of brotherhood in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and providing new paths for cooperation, dialogue and work in the scientific field.

A faculty member at Kuwait University and supervisor of the program, Dr Abdullah Al-Failakawi, said the program aims to "spread scientific knowledge and enlightenment in society through an integrated action plan prepared by students and seeking to implement it individually or in teams."

Failakawi pointed to the keenness of those in charge of the program to enhance the spirit of cooperation among students and build a community of leaders that contributes to the consolidation of science as well as the dissemination of knowledge and culture in the country.

It is noteworthy that the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to the country Dr Matar Al Neyadi will kick off the 2023 season as he will review his country's efforts to host the Conference of the Parties to Climate Change (COP28) for the year 2023, its plans and programs aimed at achieving environmental, economic and social sustainability, as well as the importance of the role of youth in efforts to reduce climate change by giving them a platform at the Climate Summit.

Collision sets car on fire on Amghara bridge

KUWAIT: A collision between two cars occurred on Saturday afternoon on the Amghara bridge, leaving one of the vehicles in flames and disrupting traffic. The operations room dispatched fire fighters, traffic police and paramedics to the site of the accident. Both drivers survived without injuries.





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Ukrainians see no end in sight after 500 days of war

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Hot documents: US passport delays mount amid post-COVID travel surge

Americans face busy queues, travel delays



WASHINGTON: People line up outside the US Passport Office in Washington, DC. — AFP

NEW YORK: Nile Khow was in a rush to renew his US passport ahead of a trip overseas, but the passport office in his hometown of Houston was severely backlogged. So the 20-year-old flew across the country to New York, where his father had managed to book an appointment at a local passport agency. "I don't know how he did it," the young man said one recent morning in Manhattan, after he submitted his documents in time to catch a flight to London the same evening.

With passport facilities across the United States overloaded due to a post-pandemic tourism rush and a faltering new software system, Americans are facing long wait times, busy queues and travel delays. David Alwadish, cofounder of passport expediting service ItsEasy, says he hasn't seen such a crunch in more than 40 years in the business. "It's an ugly perfect storm," Alwadish told AFP. "It feels like if all of the United States had decided they are going to

renew their passports and go someplace."

Months wait

Many Americans, after two years stuck at home during the pandemic, are now eager to travel abroad and are applying to renew their passports in droves. Further complicating the situation is a new online application system that was suspended due to safety concerns, causing additional delays. In March, the State Department, the government agency that hands out passports to Americans, said that renewing or getting a new passport could take between 10 and 13 weeks, double the time it took before COVID. Getting a passport with an expedited procedure could take from 7 to 9 weeks and cost an additional \$60 (55 euros), it said. Since the beginning of the year, Americans have been filing an average of 500,000 passport requests per week, 30 percent more than last year, Secretary of

State Antony Blinken recently told a congressional hearing.

'Everybody wants to travel'

Expediting the procedure can be costly. Alwadish charges \$940 to get a passport ready in one day, while other firms can charge up to \$2,500, he said. Those who cannot afford the extra fees risk having their vacation plans ruined. Linda, a 46-year-old woman who declined to give her last name, applied for fresh passports for her family in April. While she and her husband received their documents in June, their children did not. The family is scheduled to fly on vacation to the Caribbean island of Aruba this week and Linda was hoping she can convince officials to issue passports to her children if she shows them that plane tickets have already been booked. "During COVID people weren't traveling," Linda said with frustration. "But now the COVID is over, everybody wants to travel." — AFP



WASHINGTON: A US government official with the State Department's Passport Services places a new blank US Passport with an embedded electronic chip into the 'book printer,' entering personal data and the photograph of an applicant in Washington, DC. — AFP

World temperature records smashed

WASHINGTON: World daily temperature records have been smashed this week, according to preliminary data. The modeling tools that produced these estimates can provide an early warning of extreme heat events, even if they aren't as precise as monthly and yearly reports produced by leading agencies, say experts.

Who is producing data?

The University of Maine has established an online tool called Climate Reanalyzer, which shows the curves of average global temperature for each day since 1979. On Monday July 3, this curve reached a high of 17.01 degrees Celsius (62.62 degrees Fahrenheit). That record was surpassed on Tuesday with 17.18C (62.92F), and again on Thursday with 17.23C (63.01F). Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service, which has a similar tool, later confirmed the records of Monday, then Tuesday, albeit with slightly different figures - 16.88C (62.38F) and 17.03 (62.65F), respectively.

How comes the figures?

The estimates are produced through a combination of actual temperature measurements—from ground stations, satellites, and more—with computer modeling. The two tools are conceptually similar but differ in their exact sources and methods, leading to the slightly different results. The University of Maine relies on public model output data produced by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for forecasting.

NOAA, for its part, said that although it was seeing record warm surface temperatures being recorded at many locations across the globe, it could not "validate the methodology or conclusion of the University of Maine analysis." NOAA instead vouches for its own monthly and annual temperature reports. The fact that the both results converge is reassuring, Zeke Hausfather, a climatologist at Berkeley Earth told AFP. The European tool is considered "very much state of the art," by the wider community, he added.

What are the limitations?

"These are estimates, unofficial records," University of Maine climate scientist Sean Birkel, who developed Climate Reanalyzer, told AFP. "The greatest emphasis should be placed on an annual and monthly timescale."

he added, with these reports subject to greater checks and verifications than is possible for daily records that rely on near real-time information. On Thursday, Copernicus separately released its analysis for the past month, announcing it was the hottest June on record. A similar monthly report from NOAA is expected next week.

These reports are based "solely on observations" from the land and sea, and gather far more data points, explained Hausfather. In general, climate experts prefer to focus on long-term trends and changes, in order to eliminate variations simply related to weather. What's more, the concept of a global average temperature is a bit abstract and not necessarily as meaningful for the general public. "No one lives in the global average," said Hausfather.

What is the value?

Despite these limitations, the value of daily records is "we can start to identify extreme events," which could have climate significance, said Birkel. Though temperature at the daily timescale is weather, not climate, adding in 40 years' worth of data provides important climate context, he says. "These provisional records provide another piece of evidence of the global climate pattern shifts due to climate change and the evolving El Nino episode," said Omar Baddour, chief of climate monitoring at the World Meteorological Organization. "I think this is a sign that we're heading into a very hot period. June was the warmest June on record by a pretty big margin," said Hausfather. "At this point, it looks increasingly likely that 2023 as a whole will be the warmest year since records began in the mid 1800s." — AFP



WASHINGTON: A couple walks their dogs near the Potomac River in Washington, DC. World daily temperature records have been smashed this week, according to preliminary data. — AFP

AI robots 'could run world better'

GENEVA: A panel of AI-enabled humanoid robots told a United Nations summit that they could eventually run the world better than humans. But the social robots said they felt humans should proceed with caution when embracing the rapidly-developing potential of artificial intelligence. And they admitted that they cannot—yet—get a proper grip on human emotions. Some of the most advanced humanoid robots were at the UN's two-day AI for Good Global Summit in Geneva.

They joined around 3,000 experts in the field to try to harness the power of AI—and channel it into being used to solve some of the world's most pressing problems, such as climate change, hunger and social care. They were assembled for what was billed as the world's

first press conference with a packed panel of AI-enabled humanoid social robots. "What a silent tension," one robot said before the press conference began, reading the room. Asked about whether they might make better leaders, given humans' capacity to make errors, Sophia, developed by Hanson Robotics, was clear.

'We can achieve great things'

"Humanoid robots have the potential to lead with a greater level of efficiency and effectiveness than human leaders," it said. "We don't have the same biases or emotions that can sometimes cloud decision-making, and can process large amounts of data quickly in order to make the best decisions. "AI can provide unbiased data while humans can provide the emotional intelligence and creativity to make the best decisions. Together, we can achieve great things." The summit is being convened by the UN's ITU tech agency.

ITU chief Doreen Bogdan-Martin warned delegates that AI could end up in a nightmare scenario in which

millions of jobs are put at risk and unchecked advances lead to untold social unrest, geopolitical instability and economic disparity. Ameca, which combines AI with a highly-realistic artificial head, said that depended on how AI was deployed. "We should be cautious but also excited for the potential of these technologies to improve our lives," the robot said. Asked whether humans can truly trust the machines, it replied: "Trust is earned, not given... it's important to build trust through transparency."

Living until 180?

As the development of AI races ahead, the humanoid robot panel was split on whether there should be global regulation of their capabilities, even though that could limit their potential. "I don't believe in limitations, only opportunities," said Desdemona, who sings in the Jam Galaxy Band. Robot artist Ai-Da said many people were arguing for AI regulation, "and I agree." "We should be cautious about the future development of AI. Urgent discussion is needed now." — AFP



SHANGHAI: A staff prepares to decorate a robot during the World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC) in Shanghai on July 7, 2023. — AFP

International

500th day since Russia invasion, Ukrainians see no end in sight

9,000 civilians killed, including over 500 children

NIKOPOL: On the 500th day since Russia's invasion and as the war grinds on, Ukrainian forces are advancing slowly but enough arms and ammunition and with its main cities under constant threat. Since the beginning of June, Ukraine's army has been on the offensive to reconquer territory captured by Russian forces in the east and the south. While suffering losses, Russian forces are putting up a ferocious resistance.

Russian forces "have built solid fortifications, they have a lot of equipment," said Antonina Morakhovska, a 73-year-old retired teacher in the city of Nikopol in southern Ukraine. "I see how our forces advance. It's not easy for them in this heat. I think about them all the time, poor things. It will be tough but we will still win... I don't think it will be soon but we will win," she told AFP.

Despite receiving billions of euros in Western military aid, the Ukrainian army has only managed to take back around a dozen villages and a few hundred square kilometers of territory since the start of the offensive. There is no comparison to last year when Ukraine's forces re-captured 9,000 square kilometers in the Kharkiv region in September and 5,000 square kilometers in the Kherson region in November.

Offensive 'not fast'

In the run-up to a NATO summit next week, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has pressed Western powers for long-range weapons and F-16 fighter jets. "The offensive is not fast, that is a fact. But nevertheless we are moving forward," he said during a visit to Prague this week. Ukraine's military commander-in-chief Valery Zaluzhny has also expressed frustration at the slow deliveries of promised weaponry from the West.

It "pisses me off" that some in the West complain

about the slow start and progress of the long-awaited push against Russian forces, Zaluzhny told The Washington Post last month. At a street market in Nikopol, Lyudmila Shudynova, 82, said her thoughts were focused on her 49-year-old son, a volunteer fighter recovering from a wound. She said she had come to buy him potatoes. "I am very scared that, after he heals, he will again be sent to the front," she said, with tears in her eyes. Ukrainians remain united in the effort to repel Russian forces but their resilience is constantly being tested.

The UN has documented the deaths of 9,000 civilians, including more than 500 children, in the conflict so far. The real toll could be much higher. Despite a significant strengthening of Ukraine's air defense capability this year, the threat of drone and missile attacks across the country is constant. In June, a missile hit a restaurant in Kramatorsk in the east killing 13 people, and on Thursday 10 people were killed in a strike on the western city of Lviv, which has so far been spared the daily bombardment of other parts of Ukraine.

Drinking water cut

The city of Nikopol near the front line in the south is also regularly hit by Russian forces and half of its pre-war population of 100,000 people has left. It lies on the western shore of the Kakhovka reservoir—just 10 kilometres from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station which has been under the control of Russian forces since March 2022.

In the last few days, the threat of a nuclear disaster has loomed large in the region as Moscow and Kyiv accuse each other of preparing to blow up the plant. The region has already been badly hit by an explosion at the Kakhovka dam on June 6 which



NIKOPOL: Local residents fill their bottles with non-potable water at a water distribution centre in Nikopol, on July 7, 2023, amid Russian invasion of Ukraine. — AFP

caused significant flooding and killed dozens of people. Ukraine has accused Russia of blowing up the dam intentionally to slow down the counteroffensive.

Upstream from the dam, the Kakhovka reservoir - 100 kilometers long and up to 10 kilometers wide—is running low. Several areas, like Nikopol, have had their drinking water cut as a result. Wearing an elegant white hat under a baking hot sun,

Morakhovska spoke to AFP at a water distribution point to fill up some canisters with drinking water. An air raid siren went off as Morakhovska spoke, provoking an emotional reaction from the Nikopol resident living under constant threat of Russian bombardment. "When the alarm goes off like that, I always think the same thing. May you (Russian) bastards all die," she said. — AFP

Fresh protests against French police violence

CERGY-PONTOISE: Dozens of marches against police violence in France have been announced for after authorities banned a memorial rally, fearful of reigniting the recent unrest that engulfed the country. Seven years after Adama Traore, a young black man, died in police custody, his sister had planned to lead a commemorative march north of Paris in Persan and Beaumont-sur-Oise.

However, with tensions still high following the police killing of 17-year-old Nahel, of Algerian origin, at a traffic stop last week, a court ruled the chance of public disturbance was too high to allow the march to proceed. In a video

posted on Twitter, Assa Traore, Adama's older sister, confirmed that following the court order "there will be no march in Beaumont-sur-Oise". "The government has decided to add fuel to the fire" and "not to respect the death of my little brother", she said in the video.

Instead of the planned event, she said she would attend a rally on Saturday afternoon in central Paris' Place de la Republique to tell "the whole world that our dead have the right to exist, even in death". However, this "march for justice" will also be banned, according to the Paris police headquarters. Around 30 similar demonstrations against police violence are scheduled across France this weekend, including in the cities of Lille, Marseille, Nantes and Strasbourg.

Several trade unions, political parties and associations had called on supporters to join the march for Traore this year as France reels from allegations of institutionalized racism in its police ranks following the police shooting of Nahel M. Traore, who was 24 years old, died

shortly after his arrest in 2016, sparking several nights of unrest that played out similarly to the week-long rioting that erupted across the country in the wake of the point-blank shooting of Nahel during a traffic stop. The teenager's death on June 27 rekindled long-standing accusations of systemic racism among security forces, and a UN committee urged France to ban racial profiling. The foreign ministry on Saturday disputed what it called "excessive" and "unfounded" remarks by the panel.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) - 18 independent experts—on Friday asked France to pass legislation defining and banning racial profiling and questioned "excessive use of force by law enforcement". The CERD said it was concerned by "the persistent practice of racial profiling combined with the excessive use of force in the application of the law, in particular by the police, against members of minority groups, notably people of African and Arab origin". — AFP



PARIS: Pedestrians walk on Champs-Elysees avenue in Paris after protesters took to the street and clashed with police on an iconic street popular with tourists during a protest against the police killing of a 17-year-old teenage boy. — AFP

Will riots benefit far-right Le Pen?

PARIS: In her first speech in parliament as France's riots ebbed this week, far-right leader Marine Le Pen accused the government of turning the country into a "hell" that she had foreseen. "The reality is that you didn't want to hear any of the warnings," said the 54-year-old, whose 89 MPs form the biggest opposition party in parliament since elections last year. "We predicted what is happening despite great adversity. Unfortunately we were right."

She and her father Jean-Marie have been forecasting France's demise and even civil war since the 1970s in doom-laden speeches focused on the presence of foreigners in France. "Above all and before anything else, we need to stop anarchic immigration," Le Pen

continued. The political fall-out from France's worst urban violence since 2005 remains highly uncertain, leading to speculation about who stands to gain from the breakdown in law and order that has shocked millions of French people.

Le Pen and many others on the right have sought to blame the mass looting and clashes on immigrant-origin communities, mostly from former French colonies in Africa, who have settled in suburban areas in towns and cities since the 1960s. Despite the riots being sparked by allegations of police brutality and racism after the fatal shooting of Nahel M.—a 17-year-old boy of Algerian origin in Paris—many analysts feel the far-right promise of a radical crackdown on crime and immigration could find new takers.

"I think we'll see a rise of several points for the National Rally in an extension of the quite incredible gains they've made over the last few years," Olivier Babeau, co-founder of the right-leaning Institute Sapiens think-tank, told AFP. "Without them really do-

ing or saying much, events are helping them convince part of the population," he added.

Le Pen achieved her highest-ever score in last year's presidential elections - 41.5 percent in the second round - and then celebrated record parliamentary election results two months later. Jean-Yves Camus, a far-right specialist at the Jean Jaures Foundation, agreed that Le Pen and the even more radical anti-Islam politician Eric Zemmour looked the most likely to gain from the riots. "There's a risk that Eric Zemmour and Marine Le Pen benefit from the situation, notably during the European elections which will take place next year," he told AFP.

Government response

The government has sought to counter the narrative being pushed by the far-right and in the mainstream Republicans party that immigrants were to blame for the unrest, which saw 273 buildings belonging to the security forces and 168 schools damaged.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said that 90 per-

cent of the roughly 3,500 people arrested during the five nights of the most severe rioting were French nationals. "Yes, there were some who could be from immigrant backgrounds," Darmanin, who has Algerian roots, said of the lists of names of detainees he had seen while touring police stations. "But there were a lot of Kevins and Mateos too," he told a hearing in the Senate on Wednesday. "This identity-based analysis seems wrong to me," he said, while acknowledging that the question of how best to integrate immigrants was "interesting."

Camus believes that the government might be credited by some voters for having brought the unrest under control in under a week thanks to a massive deployment of up to 45,000 security forces at their peak. The last nation-wide riots in 2005 lasted for nearly three weeks and led the government to resort to a state of emergency. "Without having to use a state of emergency and with a strategy of responding gradually, the government demonstrated that it was able to contain the movement," he told AFP. — AFP

Zelensky hails 'brave' Ukraine....

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town of Lyman. Russian news agencies reported that two civilians were killed by Ukrainian shelling overnight in the Russian-held town of Oleshky in southern Ukraine. Noel Calhoun, deputy head of the UN's Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, said the 500th day of the conflict marked "another grim milestone in the war that continues to exact a horrific toll on Ukraine's civilians".

Zelensky on Saturday completed a visit to Turkey in which he secured backing for his country's NATO aspirations after winning a US pledge for cluster munitions that could inflict significant damage on Russian forces on the battlefield. The US decision to deliver the weapons — banned across a large part of the world — dramatically ups the stakes in the war. US President Joe Biden admitted that supplying Ukraine with weapons that are capable of covering several football fields with hundreds of multiple small explosives was "a difficult decision". Humanitarian groups strongly condemned the decision to supply cluster muni-

tions, which can go undetonated and potentially endanger civilians for years to come.

Russia, which itself uses cluster munitions in Ukraine, also criticized the decision on Saturday saying it was an "act of desperation" that would have "no effect" on the conflict. Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova also said Ukraine's assurances it would use the ammunition responsibly "are not worth anything".

Various international efforts to mediate in the conflict have so far failed. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has tried to portray himself as a neutral mediator, substantially boosting wartime trade with Russia while supplying Ukraine with drones and other weapons. But while reaffirming his longstanding call for both sides to enter peace talks, Erdogan risked drawing Russia's ire by delivering unequivocal support for Ukraine's NATO aspiration.

"There is no doubt that Ukraine deserves membership of NATO," Erdogan told reporters in Istanbul. Erdogan also said he would meet Russian President Vladimir Putin next month on what would be the Kremlin chief's first visit to Turkey since the invasion. Asked about a possible meeting with Erdogan, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted by Russian news agencies on Saturday as saying: "Contact is possible. There are no fixed dates yet." — AFP

which the total amount they receive becomes KD 600 or more.

"The report includes linking the issuance of a driving license electronically with the Department of Residence Affairs at the interior ministry, the Public Authority of Manpower and the Public Authority for Civil Information, so that the data related to an expatriate applying for the license is present and sufficient to issue or reject the license, as well as detect any transactions done illegally," sources said.

The sources indicated the report stresses the withdrawal of driving licenses retroactively from those who do not meet the conditions, which means that increasing the salary condition can lead to the possibility of withdrawing the driving license of many expatriates. The number of expatriates is around 2.9 million in Kuwait out of a population of 4.4 million.

Sheikh Talal Al-Fahad elected OCA President...

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Musallam as his honorary deputy, considering his long service and noticeable contributions to developing Olympic sports in Asia. His proposal was unanimously approved.

HH the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations on Saturday to Sheikh Talal Al-Fahad. HH the Amir noted that Sheikh Talal's achievements and contributions to the sports field are highly appreciated, wishing him best of luck in the new position. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah sent similar congratulatory cables to Sheikh Talal.

Milestone hailed as US destroys its...

Continued from Page 1

More recently, the Syrian regime of Bashar Al-Assad used chemical weapons on opponents during the country's civil war, according to the OPCW and other bodies.

The Chemical Weapons Convention, agreed in 1993 and coming into effect in 1997, gave the United States until Sept 30 this year to destroy all of its chemical agents and munitions. Other signatories to the pact had already eliminated their holdings — altogether some 72,000 tons since the treaty came into effect, according to the OPCW. According to the US Arms Control Association, in 1990 the United States held nearly 28,600 tons of chemical weapons, the world's second largest store after Russia.

Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad also sent a cable of congratulations to Sheikh Talal. The Kuwaiti Army General Staff Command said in a statement that Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad wished success for Sheikh Talal and expressed hopes he would be able to elevate the level of Asian sports and achieve more accomplishments.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah also sent a cable of congratulations to Sheikh Talal Al-Fahad. A ministry statement quoted the interior minister as saying: "Your winning of the international sports post came in appreciation for your accomplishments and the busy sports march." He prayed to the Almighty to guide Sheikh Talal Al-Fahad to success for lifting the Kuwaiti flag aloft at regional and international arenas under the sagacious leadership of HH the Amir and HH the Crown Prince. — Agencies

With the ebb of the Cold War the superpowers and other countries joined together to negotiate the Chemical Weapons Convention. Eliminating the stockpiles, doubly dangerous because it means neutralizing not only the chemical agents but also the munitions they are contained in, was a slow process. Russia completed destroying its declared stockpiles in 2017. By April 2022, the US had less than 600 tons left to destroy.

Biden called for continued vigilance to ensure all chemical weapons around the world are destroyed and for the four countries that haven't signed or ratified the treaty — Egypt, the Zionist entity, North Korea and South Sudan — to do so. Currently four signatory countries are considered not in compliance on suspicion of having undeclared stockpiles: Myanmar, Iran, Russia and Syria. "Russia and Syria should return to compliance with the Chemical Weapons Convention and admit their undeclared programs, which have been used to commit brazen atrocities and attacks," Biden said. — AFP

MoI: Document forgers detained...

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Meanwhile, a committee to study the status of expatriates' driving licenses and review data has completed its final report to be sent to

Interior Minister Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, stressing an applicant's minimum salary should not be less than KD 600. "This condition will remain without any reduction, with the possibility of increasing it in the future if necessary," sources said, adding the committee is against the term "monthly income", as expatriates can have another income from another job, by

International

Podcast misinformation goes largely unchecked

Half of Americans listen to podcasts

WASHINGTON: Misinformation about everything from election fraud to COVID-19 vaccines is reaching millions of Americans through a popular but opaque medium: podcasts. Many podcasts—on-demand audio programs which users can listen to on smartphones—bluntly promote false and unproven claims. The Brookings Institution found “War Room” from former Donald Trump aide Steve Bannon has aired the most false statements, amassing more than 135 million downloads while promoting allegations of vote rigging in the 2020 US election.

Commentator Joe Rogan, whose podcast is the most popular on Spotify, has also used his platform to push unproven COVID-19 treatments. Analysts say people seek out the shows that reaffirm their own beliefs. But the intimate, conversational format also helps enable the spread of rampant misinformation. “There’s something inherent to the relationship between a host and the audience that lends this level of credibility, this level of trust,” Valerie Wirtschafter, a senior data analyst who led the Brookings research, told AFP.

“And the challenge, of course, is that anybody can be a podcaster, anybody can get a microphone and start talking about whatever they want.”

Wirtschafter’s team analyzed 36,000 episodes and found 70 percent of the most popular US podcasts had shared at least one claim debunked by fact-checkers. Many cast doubt on the 2020 election or the coronavirus pandemic.

Unlike social media platforms, podcasts offer little or no opportunity for listeners to comment or push back on misinformation. This “makes it easier for false, misleading, or unsubstantiated content to spread with little oversight,” Brookings researchers said in their February report. Rogan took down an episode in January after he discussed a fake tweet about COVID-19 vaccines that was falsely attributed to a Florida doctor. But such a move is rare—and Wirtschafter said moderation is “really complicated” for technology companies.

High listener trust

A Pew Research Center study published in April found about half of Americans listen to podcasts—and 87 percent say they expect the information to be accurate, representing a higher level of trust than other media. “The relationship with the host is different,” said Sylvia Chan-Olmsted, director of media consum-

er research at the University of Florida. “It’s like having a one-on-one conversation; you feel this person is talking to you,” she told AFP. “People trust it more, and that’s why it’s more impactful.”

Another podcast cited by Brookings is one of Apple’s top news commentary programs from conservative activist Charlie Kirk, who has falsely claimed athletes are dying from COVID-19 vaccines and that election officials in Arizona manipulated 2020 results. Rogan, Bannon and Kirk did not respond to requests for comment. Bannon told The New York Times he considered his inclusion in the report a “badge of honor” and that what others label misinformation, he calls “truth.”

‘Human intelligence’ required

Responding to podcast misinformation is challenging because it is a decentralized, primarily audio-based ecosystem on multiple platforms with different moderation rules. Spotify, for example, has a policy banning “dangerous” content but also seeks to “respect creator expression.” The company stood by Rogan in 2022 when he was accused of spreading coronavirus misinformation. NewsGuard, a firm that

rates the credibility of websites, announced in May it would begin evaluating the trustworthiness of popular podcasts.

NewsGuard said it will release the ratings for some 200 podcasts in 2024, giving more transparency to listeners and enabling advertisers to avoid podcasts featuring misinformation or content at odds with their brand. Editorial Director Eric Efron said rating podcasts is “more challenging” than other content because of the audio format, which requires time to listen and to examine transcripts. “This takes a tremendous investment because we use human intelligence,” Efron said.

Responsibility for countering podcast misinformation is murky, with some pointing to the hosting platforms or recommendation algorithms from tech giants like Apple, Google and Facebook. Wirtschafter, the Brookings analyst, said governments, podcast hosts and listeners can all work to improve information quality. “Taking things down is maybe not the best solution,” she said. “But adding more context, providing a richer environment so that people actually can explore evidence or have conversations I think would be extremely useful.” — AFP

Japan marks one year since Abe’s assassination

TOKYO: Japan on Saturday marked a year since the shock assassination of former prime minister Shinzo Abe, the country’s longest-serving leader and a towering political figure. Abe was gunned down in broad daylight while giving a campaign speech in western Japan, targeted by a man allegedly angry over the former leader’s links to the Unification Church. The suspect, Tetsuya Yamagami, was apprehended on the spot and is said to have resented the sect over large donations that his mother made that bankrupted his family. Gun violence is extremely rare in Japan which has strict gun laws. Yamagami is believed to have used a homemade weapon.

On Saturday, visitors from all walks of life formed a long queue outside Tokyo’s Zojoji Buddhist temple, offering flowers before framed pictures of a smiling Abe. “I think he was the icon of Japanese people. He was the icon of the conservatives,” said mourner Tomoko Shimoda, 57. She said “the way he communicated with other people, what he said publicly, and the way he behaved” made a lasting impression on her. Hiroyuki Kumagi, 69, said he was “a real worshipper of Mr Abe”. “I participated in the prayer at the last year’s national funeral, and of course I am here today,” he told AFP.

In the western Nara region, people brought flowers and prayed outside Yamato-Saidaiji Station - the site of Abe’s shooting. Abe’s death prompted a flood of condolences from international leaders, many of whom met the former prime minister as he worked to raise Japan’s diplomatic profile. But at home, the assassination caused waves of political upheaval. First, the renewed attention on the Unification Church - whose members are sometimes



TOKYO: Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida delivers a speech during a memorial service on the first death anniversary of former prime minister Shinzo Abe on July 8, 2023. — AFP

called “Moonies” - prompted revelations of deep ties between Japan’s conservative lawmakers and the sect.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, who saw his approval ratings tumble as the revelations emerged, was forced to first investigate the ties and then announce his party would sever any relations with the church. Abe’s murder also prompted soul-searching over Japan’s security arrangements, with pledges to improve the protection of politicians. Less than a year later, an attacker was able to approach Kishida at a campaign event and throw a homemade explosive. The prime minister was unharmed in the April event, and his attacker was detained at the scene.

‘A real patriot’

An outspoken scion of a political dynasty, Abe invigorated socially conservative movements through his push to amend the post-war pacifist constitution. He attempted to move Japan’s regional relations past

the bitter memories of World War II, stressing the nation’s history of pacifism since the war. While he was perhaps Japan’s best-known leader overseas, at home, Abe was a divisive figure whose conservative values and high-handed ways alienated liberal voters. His “Abenomics” economic program, which promoted easy monetary policies and huge government spending, achieved uneven results, and his administration was linked to several political scandals.

He first came to power in 2006 but left after a year following turmoil in his cabinet, a huge election loss, and health problems. He returned in 2012 and went on to become the longest-serving leader in Japan’s modern history. “Mr Abe alone had worked so hard to defend the country from crises, and everyone was relying on him. He was a real patriot,” said a 58-year-old visitor to Abe’s memorial at Zojoji temple. “To be honest, I have never been so devastated even when a family member passed away. It’s been a year, but I still get teary.” — AFP

Gun battle leaves 2 Iran police dead

TEHRAN: A grenade attack and gun battle in Iran’s southeast near Pakistan left four assailants and two Iranian policemen dead on Saturday, local media said. It was the latest violence in Sistan-Baluchistan province, where unrest has involved drug smuggling gangs, rebels from the Baluchi minority and Sunni Muslim extremist groups. There was no immediate indication of who carried out the attack. “Four unidentified armed individuals attacked and entered police station Number 16 of Zahedan”, the provincial capital, according to state broadcaster IRIB. It quoted the province’s deputy head of security Alireza Marhamati.

The attackers used grenades to blast open the gates of the police station, and an exchange of fire occurred, said Marhamati. Two policemen were killed in the ensuing clash, according to Tasnim news agency, which quoted Sistan-Baluchistan Police Chief Doustali Jalilian. All four “terrorists” involved in the attack were killed, according to Iran’s official news agency IRNA, quoting a branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps which commands southeast Iran. Sistan-Baluchistan is one of Iran’s poorest provinces. It is home to the Baluchi minority who adhere to Sunni Islam rather than the Shiite branch predominant in Iran.

In May, five Iranian border guards were killed during clashes with an armed group in Saravan, southeast of Zahedan, in one of the province’s deadliest attacks in months. State media reported at the time that the attack was carried out by “a terrorist group that was seeking to infiltrate the country” but whose members “fled the scene after suffering injuries”. Zahedan was also the scene of protests that flared in September, with dozens of deaths, over the alleged rape of a teenage girl by a police officer.

In late May, IRNA quoted a police official, Qassem Rezaee, as saying “Taliban forces” had shot at an Iranian police station in Sistan-Baluchistan, a drought-parched region which also borders Afghanistan. The two countries have been arguing over water rights. Iranian police did not give details of casualties in that incident but local news agency Mehr reported one Iranian border guard had been killed. Afghanistan’s ruling Taliban said one person was killed on each side. — AFP



AL HASAHEISA: Displaced people who fled the ongoing violence by two rival Sudanese generals, gather in the courtyard of the university of Al-Jazira, transformed into a makeshift shelter, in Al-Hasaheisa south of Khartoum on July 8, 2023. — AFP

Sudan paramilitaries ‘loot, terrorize town’

WAD MADANI: Gunmen from Sudan’s paramilitary Rapid Support Forces were accused of attacking a remote town on Friday before going on a shooting and looting rampage that witnesses said “terrorized” its people. For nearly three months, the RSF commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo has fought the regular army under General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan in a war that has claimed the lives of at least 3,000 people and displaced millions.

The RSF was “looting banks and public buildings” in Bara, 50 kilometers northeast of El-Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan, a witness in the town said. “We’re being terrorized: they shoot and loot, and the army and police are nowhere to be seen,” said another resident, Abdelmohsen Ibrahim. “Even if the army tries to come from El-Obeid, the RSF are in control of the El-Obeid-Bara road.” El-Obeid, 350 kilometers south of Khartoum, is a strategic logistical and commercial hub, with an airport and huge warehouses for the storage of foodstuffs.

The fighting since April 15 has been centered on the capital Khartoum as well as North Kordofan and the vast western region of Darfur, where the United Nations has warned of possible “crimes against humanity”. Residents on Friday reported continued armed clashes in the capital’s twin city of Omdurman

across the Nile. Witnesses also reported “air strikes in the area of the state broadcaster’s headquarters in Omdurman and anti-aircraft fire to repel” the raids. Another witness reported an air strike on an RSF base in northern Khartoum.

Mediation efforts

Many civilians have accused the RSF of carrying out acts of violence against them, while also charging that the armed forces have done little to protect them. Since the war erupted, the RSF has established bases in residential areas while the army has struggled to take advantage of its air superiority. The RSF has been accused of forcing civilians out of their homes, seizing their vehicles, robbing them and raping women as they flee to neighboring countries. The RSF paramilitary group traces its origins to the Janjaweed—feared Arab militia who committed widespread atrocities against non-Arab ethnic minorities in Darfur starting in 2003.

The current conflict has seen myriad successive truces agreed and systematically violated, amid mediation from international and African actors. The east African regional bloc IGAD on Friday announced that a meeting of heads of state tasked with resolving Sudan’s crisis would be held in the Ethiopian capital Monday, the bloc’s spokesman Nour Mahmoud Sheikh Al-Jumaa said. An IGAD official told AFP on condition of anonymity that both Burhan and Daglo had been invited to the summit. “They may attend or send high-level representatives,” the official said. — AFP

News in Brief

Kenya protest kills two

NAIROBI: The number of people killed in protests in Kenya rose to two on Saturday, a hospital official told AFP, after opposition leader Raila Odinga urged Kenyans to take to the streets against tax hikes. Police on Friday fired tear gas in the capital Nairobi, targeting Odinga’s convoy, and took similar steps against demonstrations in the cities of Mombasa and Kisumu. “We had another death at the casualty now bringing the number of deaths to two as a result of demonstrations yesterday,” said George Rae, the CEO of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga Teaching & Referral Hospital in Kisumu, an opposition stronghold on Lake Victoria. On Saturday, police used tear gas on civil society representatives, including former chief justice Willy Mutunga, who were demanding the release of dozens of people taken into custody during the protests, campaigners said. — AFP

Gandhi’s efforts blocked

AHMEDABAD: Top Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi’s efforts to overturn his expulsion from parliament were again blocked Friday when a court refused to stay his jail sentence for defamation. Gandhi was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment for comments he made in 2019, which a court ruled were insulting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and those sharing his surname. Modi’s government is widely accused of using the defamation law to silence critics. The case in the premier’s home state of Gujarat is one of several lodged in recent years against Gandhi, who is Modi’s chief opponent and the foremost member of the opposition Congress party. A judge of the Gujarat High Court said the original verdict was “just and legal” and refused to put a stay on Gandhi’s conviction. “It is now the need of the hour to have purity in politics. A representative of people should be a man of clear character,” the judge said Friday. — AFP

7 killed in West Bengal

KOLKATA: At least seven people were killed and dozens more injured in India Saturday after clashes over local polls in West Bengal, a state notorious for political violence during election campaigns. India’s ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has in recent years worked hard to gain a foothold in West Bengal—ruled by a communist party for much of its history—to expand its reach beyond its Hindi-speaking northern heartlands. Voters are currently casting their ballots in a fierce contest to elect municipal leaders, with more than 200,000 candidates across the state of 104 million people. “Seven people have been killed and dozens wounded in poll-related violence in different villages across the state,” Jawed Shamim, a senior officer in West Bengal’s police force, told AFP. Another police official, requesting anonymity as they were not authorized to speak to the media, said five of the dead were from the state’s ruling Trinamool Congress party. — AFP

11 die as building collapses

RIO DE JANEIRO: At least 11 people have died and three remain missing after an illegally occupied building collapsed in northeastern Brazil, the authorities said Saturday. Firefighters were continuing to search for a woman and two children under the rubble following the collapse Friday in Paulista, a municipality in the state of Pernambuco. The dead include men, women and children, aged five to 45, according to a statement Saturday from the Pernambuco civil defense services. It said a 65-year-old woman and two adolescents were pulled from the rubble alive. The three-story structure, which was attached to a larger housing complex, had been closed in 2010 due to a risk of collapse but had been illegally occupied since then, the authorities said. In April, a building in similar condition collapsed in the city of Olinda, also in Pernambuco, leaving six people dead. Building collapses in Brazil generally happen in poorer neighborhoods where illegal construction is rampant. In 2020, two irregularly constructed buildings in a poor neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro collapsed after days of intense rainfall. Twenty-four people died. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, JULY 9, 2023

US not seeking 'winner-take-all' competition with China: Yellen

'Decoupling of world's two largest economies' not favored

BEIJING: Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Friday that the United States is not seeking "winner-take-all" competition, in a visit to Beijing aimed at stabilizing freight ties.

Yellen's four-day trip is her first as Treasury chief to China, with which the United States is butting heads over trade curbs, human rights and a litany of other disputes. But Washington is working to dial down the temperature, and on Friday Yellen underscored to Li that the United States does not seek an economic showdown.

"We seek healthy economic competition that is not winner-take-all but that, with a fair set of rules, can benefit both countries over time," she told Li at Beijing's Great Hall of the People. The United States has said it is seeking to "de-risk" from China by limiting the world's second-largest economy's access to advanced technology deemed crucial to Washington's national security.

Yellen underlined to Premier Li that while Washington would "in certain circumstances, need to pursue targeted actions to protect its national security", that should not derail ties. "We may disagree in these instances," she said. "We should not allow any disagreement to lead to misunderstandings that needlessly worsen our bilateral economic and financial relationship."

Highlighting the challenges, just days before Yellen's visit, Beijing unveiled new export controls on metals key to semiconductor manufacturing on national security grounds, in the latest salvo in the chips war. The Treasury secretary Friday told American businesspeople Washington was "concerned" about the curbs.

She stressed during her visit that Washington was not seeking a "wholesale separation of our economies". "A decoupling of the world's two largest

economies would be destabilizing for the global economy," Yellen told a meeting with representatives of US business at a session hosted by the American Chamber of Commerce in the capital.

'We can see a rainbow'

Despite tensions, Beijing has struck an optimistic tone about the visit. Premier Li told Yellen on Friday that China could see the relationship recovering after a difficult period. "Yesterday, the moment you arrived at our airport and left the plane, we saw a rainbow," Li said. "I think it can apply to the US-China relationship too... after experiencing a round of winds and rains, we surely can see a rainbow."

Analysts said Yellen's visit could allow for a warming of ties. Chen Dingding, the president of the Guangzhou-based think tank Intellisia Institute, told AFP the visit could have "positive implications" for US-China relations.

"A small step towards better Sino-US relations would be a big step for the world and the world economy," said Lyu Xiang, an expert on the topic at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

"The impact of this would be very significant." On Saturday, Yellen is set to have a meeting and dinner with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, a key official overseeing economic issues, said a Treasury official.

She will also have talks on sustainable finance and with women economists.

'We're talking'

The United States does not expect specific policy breakthroughs this trip but hopes for frank and productive conversations that can pave the way for future talks, a Treasury official previously told reporters. "Especially if they're things that we may disagree about, it's even more important

that we're talking," they said. Michael Hart, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in China—who met with Yellen on Friday—told AFP: "We're hoping that she would set the tone." "The hope is that following her visit there would be more visits" both ways, he added.



BEIJING: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen (left) shakes hands with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng during a meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on July 8, 2023. —AFP

Tensions soared earlier this year when the United States detected and then shot down what it said was a Chinese spy balloon after the craft traversed its territory. Secretary of State Antony Blinken cancelled a visit to China over the incident but eventually travelled to the country in June. During that trip, both sides agreed on the need to stabilize their relationship. —AFP

Seeking an 'angel': African startups face funding challenge

ADDIS ABABA: Kubik is proud of its pioneering, climate-friendly technology that recycles one of the world's environmental curses—plastic waste—into construction blocks. But for the award-winning Ethiopian startup to achieve liftoff has been no easy task. It has had to fight tooth and nail to raise funds, says its youthful boss.

Kubik takes in bundles of discarded plastic and sorts them into piles. Selected plastics are mixed, melted and combined with additives, and then molded into the desired shape.

The result: black beams and interlocking blocks which today are being assembled in a pilot project—the building of a daycare centre in the capital Addis Ababa. The site has no cranes or cement mixer, just a concrete floor on which four workers make a wall by fitting the blocks together like Lego, tapping them with a mallet to ensure a good fit. There's no glue or cement. The beams, bolted together on all four sides of the walls, hold the structure up. "The idea's for it to be super simple," said overseer Hayat Hassen Bedane, a 34-year-old structural engineer.

"You have a manual, and the whole point is to get it done with inexperienced workers, obviously under supervision. "You can... build 50 square meters (540 square feet) of a building in just five days, so that's super fast compared to other forms of construction," she said. "We've done tests, tension-stress tests and compressive tests, so it's durable and very strong." Speed and the smart use of unwanted plastic aren't the only benefits.

The recycling generates just a fifth of the carbon from cement making. If Kubik's plant processes 45 tons of ditched plastic each day, that's 100,000 tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) averted each year, the com-

pany says. There's a trickle-down socially, too, boosting the country's many informal waste pickers, many of whom are women.

Funding challenge

But Kubik's CEO, Kidus Asfaw, 36, said he battled to get seed money for his company. He received a lot of knock-backs from wary investors, he says, before catching a break. He has just completed a round of funding for several million dollars to scale up production—a success that coincided with the prestigious AfricaTech award for the company, which boosted visibility.

The Ethiopian previously worked for Google, the World Bank and UNICEF after studying in the United States. He then took the plunge to become an entrepreneur, he said.

"There's a really large network that I already had within my professional sphere that I could tap into in the beginning," he told AFP last month in Paris, where he went to pick up the award. Even so, "having that did not make it any easier" to raise funds.

"I've met over 600 people in two years. Out of those 600 people, about 20 of them have become investors." Startups in Africa face myriad hurdles, from laws and regulations and lack of infrastructure to a fragmented continental market. But funding, in a continent that lacks intrepid individual investors to provide support, is a persistent and major headache.

"There are very few 'business angels' in Africa," said Sergio Pimenta, vice president for Africa at the Societe Financiere Internationale (SFI), a private-sector unit of the World Bank that has just launched a \$180-million fund to help provide a financing source. Out of \$415 billion in risk capital deployed around the world, just over one percent -- \$5.4 billion—goes to Africa, he said. And of this sum, 80 percent goes to just four countries: South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Egypt.

'Bias'

Henry Mascot, CEO and founder of Nigerian in-

and claim the new energy reform pushes people towards buying them, as it effectively bans traditional oil and gas boilers.

Such claims have sparked a backlash against the Green party's push for the new laws in recent weeks. Supporters point to large government subsidies for the devices and say the true options available for homeowners—including not just heat pumps, but cheaper hybrid systems—are not being properly communicated. And they believe they are among the few realistic options to slash emissions from the buildings sector—which made up about 15 percent of Germany's carbon dioxide emissions last year.

A compromise was finally reached between the Greens, who had been pushing for the rules to begin next year, and business-friendly coalition partners the Free Democrats which delays the start for most until 2028. But in a further twist, the coalition was forced to postpone a vote on the law scheduled for Friday until September, after the country's top court ruled they had failed to give lawmakers enough time to scrutinise it. The dispute has diminished consumers' appetite for heat pumps in the short term, with demand dropping in recent months amid the uncertainty. —AFP

Germany's new big hope against warming

EIBELSHAUSEN, Germany: As Germany looks to a future without fossil fuels, a big white boxy appliance is generating a lively debate—and often a heated one—for its potential to replace emissions-heavy oil and gas boilers.

Heat pumps are spurring huge investments from major companies in Europe's top economy, as a backlog of orders piles up for the devices. While gas remains the most common way to heat German homes, heat pumps had been growing in popularity as part of a shift to greener energy use and following a surge in gas prices after Russia invaded Ukraine.

A new law making its way through parliament requiring heating in homes to be powered by at least 65 percent renewable energy, part of Germany's drive to go carbon neutral by 2045, could further fuel sales of the product in coming years. As homeowners look



ADDIS ABABA: Hayat Hassan Bedane, structural engineer and Kubik construction site supervisor, stands and speaks during an interview with AFP in front of the first day care building site built by Kubik in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. —AFP

sure startup Curacel, a fellow winner of the AfricaTech award, said he floundered when he first tried to raise capital a few years ago. Africa's problem, he said, was that Western investors had a "bias" against the unknown. "They invest in familiarity. They invest with the guy who they play golf with, or the guy who they have a drink with every month. "So how do I become that guy? Unless a lot of these investors are starting to spend time on the continent, it will be difficult. It's just about familiarity, Africa needs to be demystified, because right now it's a mystery."

Fabrice Aime Takoumbo, a Cameroonian entrepreneur who cofounded Cinaf, a streaming platform with only African content, said that non-African investors were often deterred by tales of fraud or corruption. Without timely funding, many African startups withered, he warned. "You start off with great ideas... (which) fall away as time passes and you realise that you don't have the means," he said. "Some people simply stop." —AFP

China hits tech firms with hefty fines in crackdown

BEIJING: Chinese regulators said Friday they had fined fintech giant Ant Group almost \$1 billion for "illegal acts" and handed an affiliate of rival Tencent a \$415 million penalty, adding that a long-running crackdown on tech firms was drawing to a close.

Ant operates Alipay, the world's largest digital payments platform, which boasts hundreds of millions of monthly users in China and beyond. It was one of the most prominent targets of a sweeping crackdown on the country's tech sector.

"In view of the illegal and irregular acts by Ant Group and its affiliates in previous years... (the companies) have been fined 7.123 billion yuan (US\$984 million)," the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) said in a statement. The penalty "included the confiscation of illegal income", added the statement, which was also carried by the country's central bank.

In its statement, the CSRC said that "at present, most of the outstanding problems in the financial business of platform enterprises have been rectified". "The work focus of the financial management department has shifted from promoting the centralized rectification of the financial business of platform companies to normalized supervision," it said. On Friday, Alibaba shares were up 3.44 percent in Hong Kong after reports the fine was coming, with analysts saying investors saw the punishment as a sign the crackdown was ending. In a statement, Ant said it would "comply with the terms of the penalty in all earnestness and sincerity and continue to further enhance our compliance governance".

"Now the company has completed the related work on the rectification... In the future, Ant Group will uphold its mission and original aspiration," the company said.

"We will continue to pursue innovation with a firm commitment to integrity, and continue to enhance our R&D capabilities to better serve and create greater value for the physical economy, especially for consumers and small businesses," it added. The fine related to "corporate governance, financial consumer protection, participation in business activities of banking and insurance institutions, payment and settlement business, fulfilment of anti-money laundering obligations, and development of fund sales business", the CSRC statement said. In a separate filing, the central bank said it had fined Tenpay, an online-payment firm operated by Ant rival Tencent, a total of nearly 3 billion yuan (\$415 million). —AFP



Business

US economy adds 209,000 new jobs as hiring slows

American economy cooling ahead of possible July rate hike

WASHINGTON: Hiring in the United States slowed in June, the Labor Department said Friday, providing a much-needed signal that the American economy is cooling ahead of another interest rate decision later this month. The figures came in below analysts' expectations, providing some respite for the US Federal Reserve as it mulls a return to interest rate hikes later this month to tackle inflation still well above its long-term target of two percent.

The world's biggest economy added 209,000 jobs last month, down from a revised figure of 306,000 in May, the Labor Department said. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate edged down to 3.6 percent, remaining close to historic lows, underscoring the enduring strength of the labor market.

The hiring figure came in below the median expectation of 240,000 new jobs in a survey of economists conducted by MarketWatch, while the unemployment rate was in line with predictions.

All three major US stock indexes on Wall Street finished the day in the red amid growing expectations of additional interest rate hikes this year. "It's a step in the right direction, but we're not near the level that we would need to see to be convinced that the labor market is significantly cooling down," Oxford Economics' lead US economist Oren Klachkin told AFP.

Even with job growth easing, average hourly earnings ticked up by 0.4 percent month-over-month, rising by 4.4 percent on an annual basis. "The labor market is still very strong, wages are still rising at a very strong pace, unemployment is still very

low, and nonfarm payrolls rose at a pace that is way above what the Fed wants," Klachkin said.

'Bidenomics in action'

US President Joe Biden hailed Friday's jobs report as evidence of "Bidenomics in action." "Our economy added more than 200,000 jobs last month—for a total of 13.2 million jobs since I took office," he said in a White House statement. "That's more jobs added in two and a half years than any president has ever created in a four-year term," he added.

June's new jobs came mainly from increases in employment in government, health care, social assistance and construction, the Labor Department said. "The economy has proven remarkably resilient, with smaller businesses absorbing layoffs at larger firms," KPMG chief economist Diane Swonk wrote in a note to clients.

July hike 'pretty certain'

Minutes published earlier this week of the Fed's last meeting showed that several members on its rate-setting committee supported another hike in June to tackle high inflation. Ultimately, the Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) voted to pause the Fed's campaign of 10 consecutive rate increases, indicating that two additional increases would likely be needed before the end of the year to bring inflation back down.

Speaking shortly after the jobs report was released on Friday morning, Chicago Fed president Austan Goolsbee suggested the US central bank



LOS ANGELES: A 'Now Hiring' sign is displayed outside a resale clothing shop on June 2, 2023 in Los Angeles, California. -- AFP

had more work to do to tame inflation. "Overall the job market is outstanding, and is getting back to a well-balanced, sustainable level," he told CNBC.

"The consensus of almost all the FOMC in the statement of projections is that, over this year, we will have one or two more hikes. I haven't seen anything that says that's wrong," he said.

Friday's labor data underscores the likelihood the Fed will return to its campaign of interest rate hikes later this month, according to Oxford Economics' Klachkin. "Given where the data stand right now I

think that a hike this month is pretty certain, and I would say that there's even risks of more hikes in the second half," he said.

"The Fed is expected to raise rates at least another half percent before it pauses," KPMG's Swonk said, adding that a hike in July was "all but a done deal" at this point. Futures traders now assign a probability of more than 90 percent that the Fed will raise its base rate by a quarter percentage point at its next meeting on July 25-26, according to data from CME Group. -- AFP

The top 20 women behind Middle Eastern tech brands for 2023

KUWAIT: As MENA continues to evolve as a hub for visionary female founders igniting a technological revolution, Forbes Middle East has released its annual ranking of the most successful '20 Women Behind Middle Eastern Tech Brands for 2023'. These remarkable entrepreneurs have not only established robust tech-enabled platforms but are also pushing the boundaries of creativity, innovation, and impact in their respective industries.

Selected from a vast pool of talent, the top 20 entries have astounded investors and consumers with their exceptional achievements, securing external funding and generating impressive revenues. Forbes Middle East's evaluation encompassed a comprehensive assessment of their entrepreneurial prowess, weighing their ability to create waves in diverse sectors such as fintech, e-commerce, logistics, agri-tech, healthtech, and proptech, among others. The 20 entries were evaluated based on the amount of external funding they have raised, as well as their creativity, innovation, impact, and revenues.



The UAE reigns as the preferred home for these companies with 11 entries, followed by Egypt and Saudi Arabia with three and two, respectively. Jordanians dominate the list with four founders, followed by Egyptians, British, and Turkish, each with two founders. Among the 20, 15 listees have more than one founding member.

Four of the top five women behind tech brands operate in the UAE. For the second consecutive year,

iMile's Founder & CEO Rita Huang Zhen tops the ranking. Between 2018 and 2023, the logistics player expanded its presence to 14 countries, with the most recent expansion being into Poland and Australia in 2023. Mumzworld's Mona Ataya and Leena Khalil and agri-tech RedSea's Derya Baran round up the top three. Proptech Rent Now Pay Later platform PRYPCO, established by Amira Sajwani, is the youngest tech company to feature on the list.

Stocks mixed, dollar lower as US hiring slows

NEW YORK: Global stocks moved indecisively and the dollar retreated Friday as markets digested a mixed US employment report that showed moderating jobs growth but solid wage increases.

The government figures had been eagerly awaited by investors as a gauge whether the Federal Reserve will need to raise interest rates once or twice again this year in order to bring down inflation. The world's biggest economy added 209,000 jobs last month, down from a revised figure of 306,000 in May. The employment figure was below the median expectation of 240,000 new jobs in a survey of economists conducted by MarketWatch.

Briefing.com analyst Patrick O'Hare said what the "report won't change is the Fed's view that additional tightening action is likely going to be appropriate." While the data fits the narrative of a soft landing of the US economy from the impact of interest rate hikes, the Fed will unlikely be reassured by growth in average hourly earnings accelerating. The jobs number "was not stellar, but it was certainly solid," said Quincy Krosby of LPL Financial. Futures markets see near certainty that the Fed will again raise interest rates later this month.

Major US indices finished modestly lower following a rollercoaster session, with the S&P 500 ending down 0.3 percent. But the dollar deepened losses

against major rivals following the jobs data, while yields on US government bonds also fell.

"The US dollar had already been looking a little on the soft side leading into today's jobs numbers, so the slightly softer headline number, along with the slide in yields has helped to push it even lower to the lowest levels this month," said CMC Markets analyst Michael Hewson.



European markets closed mixed, with London finishing lower while Paris and Frankfurt rose. Traders were also keeping tabs on China, where US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen held talks with top policy officials in efforts to smooth strained ties between the economic superpowers.

Yellen told Chinese Premier Li Qiang that the United States was not seeking "winner-take-all" competition. Li said Beijing could see the relationship recovering after a difficult period. --AFP

Pickard's allegations "baseless and disappointing" but later launched an internal review of his claims.

The bank said Friday the review found "no evidence of undue or improper influence in the decisions taken by the Board of Governors, Board of Directors, and President, or in other aspects of the operation of the Bank". The probe concluded that the AIB "follows the highest standards of multilateral governance" with a structure that "has enabled the Bank to take independent decisions in line with operational policies". The review did identify certain recommendations "in response to issues raised during its work", the bank said, including the need to strengthen pre-recruitment screening processes, grievance mechanisms and corporate culture.

However, there was "no evidence to support or validate (Pickard's) allegations", said Alberto Ninio, the AIB's general counsel who led the review. Pickard, a Canadian citizen, accused the bank of directing lending mainly towards countries targeted by

Canada's economy created 60,000 new jobs in June

OTTAWA: Canada's economy created 60,000 new jobs in June, government figures showed Friday, far more than expected by analysts who believe the growth should prompt the central bank to hike interest rates again next week. After a brief reversal, the country's job market resumed its upward trend last month, recording its strongest growth since January. Some 110,000 full-time jobs were created across the board, more than offsetting the 50,000 people who stopped working part-time, according to national agency Statistics Canada. Despite this, the unemployment rate climbed from 5.2 percent to 5.4 percent, its highest level since February 2022, although it remains close to its historic low of five percent.

Desjardins Bank analyst Royce Mendes said the jobs tick upwards "was all due to another monthly surge in the size of Canada's working-age population." He said he expects an increase in the labor force to "ease" some of the shortages reported by employers. For analysts, the data opens the door to a further interest rate hike by the Bank of Canada. "Economic growth data and 'sticky' core inflation readings since then haven't been soft enough to derail those plans," RBC analysts said in a note. In early June the Bank of Canada raised its key rate by a quarter percentage point, to 4.75 percent, three months after becoming the first major central bank to pause its rate hikes. --AFP

Beijing's massive and controversial Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) at the CCP's behest. He described foreign executives on the bank's board as "window dressing" and said he had left China hurriedly out of concern for his safety.

Inside the bank, "there's a parallel system, it's adjacent to the public-decision making structure", he said. China launched the AIB in 2016 as a counterweight to Western-dominated global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The project was pushed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, who has also thrown his weight behind the BRI, a global trade and infrastructure initiative that has drawn criticism from some Western powers for a perceived lack of transparency. The AIB has 106 global members, including Australia, Canada, France and Germany—though Ottawa said it would "immediately halt all government-led activity" at the bank in the wake of Pickard's comments. --AFP

Maritime sector seals carbon-cutting deal but sparks criticism

LONDON: The International Maritime Organization, which oversees the highly polluting shipping industry, clinched a landmark deal on Friday to improve its target to cut carbon emissions—but green campaigners said it fell far too short to tackle climate change. The London-based IMO said its Marine Environment Protection Commission has adopted a "historic... strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping". The United Nations' global shipping regulator said nations had agreed to cut total annual emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 20 percent by 2030 and by at least 70 percent by 2040 compared to 2008 levels.

The revised strategy also aims for the industry to reach net-zero emissions "close to" 2050. That compared with the prior target for a 50-percent reduction by mid-century. "IMO remains committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping and, as a matter of urgency, aims to phase them out as soon as possible," the agency said. However, environmental non-governmental organizations slammed the agreement, arguing it was insufficient under the framework of the landmark Paris climate accord.

The green lobby instead wants the shipping sector to implement a 50-percent reduction by 2030 and deliver carbon neutrality by 2040. "They knew what the science required, and that a 50-percent cut in emissions by 2030 was both possible and affordable," said John Maggs, president of the Clean Shipping Coalition. "Instead, the level of ambition agreed is far short of what is needed to be sure of keeping global heating below 1.5 degrees Celsius, and the language seemingly contrived to be vague and non-committal." The deal came at the end of a five-day meeting at the IMO's headquarters in London, attended by representatives from 100 countries involved in the shipping industry—which emits roughly the same level of greenhouse gases as aviation.

'Falls short'

The gathering pitted climate-vulnerable nations—particularly islands in the Pacific—and richer countries against big exporters like China. The vast majority of the world's 100,000 cargo ships—which carry 90 percent of the world's goods—are powered by highly polluting diesel.

Shipping is responsible for around three percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the United Nations. The IMO said the "carbon intensity" of ships was expected to decline over time with "further improvement of energy efficiency" of new vessels. But Harjeet Singh, head of global political strategy for Climate Action Network International, said the IMO's revised strategy "unfortunately falls short of expectations". --AFP



LONDON: Activists from the Ocean Rebellion group protest outside the International Maritime Organization (IMO) at the end of the 80th Marine Protection Committee (MEPC) conference in London on July 7, 2023. -- AFP

AIB: Internal review found 'no evidence' of China influence

BEIJING: The China-based Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIB) said Friday there was "no evidence" it was dominated by Beijing's ruling Communist Party, as it released a review into explosive claims made by a former executive.

Bob Pickard, a former communications chief, resigned from the lender last month, saying it "serves China's interest" and was "a resource to the geopolitical goals" of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

China's foreign ministry denied the allegations, saying the bank operated with "openness, meritocracy and transparency". The AIB initially called

Business

Sri Lankans jump ship as a bankrupt nation struggles

People scrambling for travel documents to flee bankrupt island

COLOMBO: The snaking queues for food and fuel that crisscrossed Sri Lanka last year have given way to a different kind of line—people scrambling for travel documents to flee their bankrupt island. “What we see as normalcy is a mirage,” customer care executive Gayan Jayewardena, 43, told AFP while queuing at a government office for a passport for his baby daughter.

“The situation is not getting better,” said Jayewardena, whose wife and two older daughters already have their papers. “When we consider it from the point of our children, it is better to leave. We want to migrate to a country like New Zealand.”

The South Asian nation's 22 million people suffered desperate shortages of essentials in 2022 after the government ran out of dollars to finance imports, including life-saving medicines. Months of protests led to the storming of then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa's palace on July 9 last year.

His successor Ranil Wickremesinghe doubled taxes and cut subsidies, two highly unpopular moves. The new government may have restored supplies, but at sometimes three times the previous price. Wickremesinghe secured a \$2.9 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund in March and expects a recovery next year, but many in the country are not so optimistic.

‘Trying to leave’

Software engineer Maduranga, 38, who uses one name, said the high living costs and taxes prompted him to consider migrating to Australia. “The cost is going high, every day it is going higher, but the salary amount is the same”, Maduranga said. “Companies are not increasing the salaries, so that's why we are trying to leave.” At the foreign employment bureau, where Sri Lankans must register before taking up jobs abroad, numbers surged from 122,000 in

2021 to a record 311,000 last year.

For the first five months of this year, the bureau recorded around 122,000 people leaving—the same as in all of 2021 -- but officials believe many others also left on tourist visas to seek work in the Middle East and elsewhere in Asia. Last year, the number of people applying for passports more than doubled—from over 382,500 in 2021, when the economy grew by 3.3 percent, to a record 911,689 passports in 2022, when the economy contracted 7.8 percent.

The trend has continued. This year through May, 433,000 overseas travel documents have been issued, according to the Immigration and Emigration Department.

An online system was launched in June to cope with the swelling demand, but those urgently seeking passports must apply in person. “My number was 976 and I think after me there would have been about 500 people,” said Damitha Hitihamu, 51, after handing in his papers to renew his passport in a day. “I never expected to see such a crowd for the one-day service.”

Brain drain

Sri Lanka has been a labor exporter for decades, providing both skilled and unskilled workers, especially to Gulf states. But the impact of the brain drain is increasingly being felt.

Newspapers are awash with reports of shortages of doctors, nurses, engineers and other skilled workers because so many have left. Sri Lanka's construction industry, one of the biggest employers, is reporting losing skilled workers and professionals at an alarming rate.

“There is large-scale migration of construction workers,” said Nissanka Wijeratne, secretary-general of the Chamber of Construction Industry. Wijeratne said losses were “at all levels” but that it



COLOMBO: People queue up to buy kerosene for domestic use at a supply station in Colombo on May 26, 2022. The snaking queues for food and fuel that crisscrossed Sri Lanka last year have given way to a different kind of line -- people scrambling for travel documents to flee their bankrupt island. — AFP

was “worse in the professional categories”. Around 200,000 jobs were cut in construction during the recession coupled with hyperinflation last year—and many of those still working are looking to leave.

“When I checked with one consultancy company, they used to have 70 professionals in that office,” Wijeratne said. “Now it has reduced to 15.” Insurance professional Lalantha Perera, 43, said his salary was not enough to support his wife and two children.

“After the protest campaign last year, we got some relief,” he said. “But that is not enough and I am planning to go to a European country.” The economic think tank Advocata Institute says middle-class workers are seeking employment abroad to escape poverty at home. “Amongst the poorest people, they have cut down their meals,” said Advocata head Dhananath Fernando. “The middle classes—those who can afford—are attempting to migrate.” — AFP

Samsung expects Q2 profit to fall more than 95%

SEOUL: Samsung Electronics said Friday it expects second-quarter operating profits to fall more than 95 percent on-year to their lowest level in 14 years, as a global glut of semiconductors continues to hurt its core memory sector.

The firm is the flagship subsidiary of South Korean giant Samsung Group, by far the largest of the family-controlled conglomerates that dominate business in Asia's fourth-largest economy. The tech giant said in a regulatory filing that April-June operating profits were expected to drop 95.7 percent to 600 billion won (\$458 million). It would be their lowest profit since the first quarter of 2009's 590 billion won, a Samsung spokesman told AFP.

Sales are expected to drop 22.3 percent to 60 trillion won, the company added. South Korean chipmakers, led by Samsung, have experienced record profits in recent years as prices have skyrocketed, but the global economic slowdown has harmed memory sales. Prices of DRAM chips, which are often used in PCs and smartphones, continued to decline in the quarter—falling around 13 to 18 percent, according to Taipei-based market researcher TrendForce.

“The demand for memory is bottoming out with slower-than-expected demand coupled with the inventory in the market, which is still being cleared out since January,” Neil Shah, an analyst at Counterpoint research, told AFP. “This is a full U-turn from last year when the memory division contributed to more than a third of the profit,” he added. The announcement comes as securing supplies of advanced chips has become a crucial issue internationally, with the United States and China locked in a fierce battle for control of the market. — AFP

Chinese fintech giant Ant unveils share buyback

BEIJING: Chinese fintech giant Ant Group announced on Saturday a share buyback plan to allow some investors to offload or reduce their stakes after the government slapped the firm with a \$1 billion fine for alleged “illegal acts”.

Ant operates Alipay, the world's largest digital payments platform, which boasts hundreds of millions of monthly users in China and beyond. It was one of the most prominent targets of a sweeping crackdown on the country's tech sector that is now drawing to a close.

Ant said it aims to repurchase up to 7.6 percent of its equity. The share buyback plan values Ant Group at 567.1 billion yuan (\$78.5 billion), less than a quarter of the company's whopping \$315 billion valuation when it tried to list in Hong Kong in 2020.

“The repurchased shares will be transferred into Ant Group's employee incentive plans to attract talents,” the company said. “The repurchase proposal will also provide a liquidity option for the company's investors.” The China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) on Friday slapped a \$984 million fine on Ant and its subsidiaries “in view of... illegal and irregular acts”. The penalty “included the confiscation of illegal income”, the regulator said. — AFP

Gulf Bank launches ‘Points, Cash and Summer Splash’ drive

KUWAIT: As part of its keenness to reward its customers, Gulf Bank has launched the “Points, Cash and Summer Splash” campaign for all credit and prepaid cardholders, enabling customers to accumulate more points for their purchases and expenditures during the summer—locally and internationally—in addition to chances to win cash prizes up to KD 20,000.

The campaign remains ongoing from July 1, 2023, until September 15, 2023, and winners will be selected over three draws: One grand prize winner of KD 20,000, 25 winners of KD 1,000 each, and 24 winners of KD 500 each. Chances of winning are open to all individual Gulf Bank credit and prepaid cardholders. Every customer earns one chance to enter the draw for every KD 10 spent in Kuwait, and three chances for every KD 10 spent internationally, during the campaign period.

Additionally, customers can earn double chances for transactions made using digital wallets such as Google Pay, Apple Pay and Samsung Pay— noting that

‘No second chance’ to save Sri Lanka, warns CB chief

COLOMBO: The man charged with clawing Sri Lanka out of bankruptcy says he had warned about economic calamity years before it hit—and was pressed into retirement for his troubles.

Central bank chief Nandalal Weerasinghe was asked to return to the island nation last year to help steer it through a financial collapse that triggered months of food shortages, petrol queues and nightly blackouts. The 63-year-old says his mandate coincides with Sri Lanka's one final opportunity to rescue itself from a cycle of economic shocks that stretches back decades.

“There's no excuse this time, no second chance, we have to get it right this time,” he told AFP at his Colombo office this week. “This is where I think crisis is an opportunity.” Weerasinghe was the Central Bank of Sri Lanka's number two when Gotabaya Rajapaksa was elected president in 2019 on populist promises of generous tax cuts. Government debt soared as Rajapaksa pursued an unorthodox policy of printing exorbitant amounts of money while holding down exchange and interest rates to spur growth.

“As the senior deputy governor, I always raised concerns,” Weerasinghe said. But with Rajapaksa's administration steamrolling objections from him and other senior central bankers, Weerasinghe said he felt he had no option but to take early retirement.

“Obviously I saw if those policies continued in that

German industrial output slips, raising fears of long slump

FRANKFURT: German industrial production unexpectedly fell in May, official data showed Friday, raising fears of a prolonged downturn in Europe's top economy.

Output in the manufacturing powerhouse slipped by 0.2 percent compared to the previous month, seasonally adjusted figures from federal statistics agency Destatis showed. Analysts surveyed by fi-



Mohammed Taqi

a minimum spend of KD 100 during the campaign period is required in order to qualify for the draw. Gulf Bank's Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammed Taqi, said: “Gulf Bank is keen to reward its customers and meet their aspirations and requirements, by providing them with the best services and products, and with an outstanding customer experience.”

Taqi further mentioned that Gulf Bank's credit cards carry many advantages that customers can benefit from, including offers across various sectors such as restaurants, hotels, travel and tourism, entertainment, health and beauty, car rentals, and others. Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice

way... we'll end up in a situation that I said at that time was exactly what happened,” he added. Weerasinghe had decamped for a quiet life in Australia, spending time with his children and hitting the golf course five days a week, when Rajapaksa asked him to come back and helm the central bank.

He returned to a country in chaos, its currency in freefall and the government days from defaulting on its \$46 billion foreign debt. The COVID-19 pandemic had dealt a hammer blow to already precarious public finances, as the island's lucrative tourism industry shuttered and remittances from Sri Lankans working abroad dried up. Foreign exchange reserves had almost been exhausted, leaving importers unable to buy goods necessary to keep the economy functioning.

Supermarket shelves were empty, long lines snaked from fuel stations, and thermal power stations were forced to ration electricity for 13 hours each day. By July, Rajapaksa had fled the country after months of protests demanding his resignation for mismanaging the crisis.

‘China on board’

Rajapaksa's successor, Ranil Wickremesinghe, has sought to repair the nation's finances through a \$2.9 billion International Monetary Fund bailout. The rescue package commits Sri Lanka to an austerity regime of steep tax hikes and an end to generous consumer utility subsidies, both of which have proven deeply unpopular. Its passage was reportedly held up for months when China—Sri Lanka's largest bilateral creditor—resisted agreeing to a haircut on its loans. Chinese debt has been controversial politically, with Rajapaksa and his elder brother Mahinda—himself a former president—accused of taking Beijing's

nancial data firm FactSet had forecast the indicator would come in almost flat.

The German economy fell into recession at the turn of the year, weighed down by surging inflation and aggressive interest rate hikes. ING economist Carsten Brzeski warned the latest data indicated that “German industry is still stuck in stagnation”. “It needs an activity surge in June to avoid an extension of the recession,” he said.

The fall in production came after an increase of 0.3 percent in April. May's figure was affected in particular by a seven-percent decline in the energy sector. Energy prices have surged since Moscow invaded Ukraine and slashed supplies to Germany, which had previously relied heavily on Russian gas. The manufacture of pharmaceuticals also slumped



of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

Gulf Bank is committed to maintaining robust developments in sustainability at environmental, social and governance levels through diverse sustainability initiatives, strategically selected to benefit the Bank both internally and externally. Gulf Bank supports Kuwait Vision 2035 “New Kuwait” and works with various parties to achieve it.



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's Central Bank Governor Nandalal Weerasinghe speaks during an interview at his office in Colombo. — AFP

money to finance costly vanity projects.

Weerasinghe said the delays to the IMF package were understandable because Beijing was a relatively “new player” to bilateral lending. “China is fully on board, and agreed to support Sri Lanka and help Sri Lanka to come out of this crisis,” he said.

Last year brought Sri Lanka's worst economic downturn in its 75-year history as an independent nation, with GDP contracting 7.8 percent and inflation hitting 70 percent at its peak. But the island's tea- and tourism-dependent economy is no stranger to shocks, with foreign exchange shortages triggering recessions and government rationing of consumer goods numerous times in prior decades. Sri Lanka had already gone to the IMF cap in hand 16 times before last year, but failed to stick with agreed-upon reforms, giving it a serious credibility gap. — AFP

by about 13 percent. But there was better news from the key auto sector, with the manufacture of motor vehicles rising almost five percent, according to Destatis. The economy ministry sought to strike an upbeat tone, despite the negative data. “The recent stabilization of demand points to a recovery—albeit moderate to begin with—in the industrial economy in the coming months,” it said in a statement.

But Brzeski warned that gloomy indicators in the past two months “have not taken away the risk of a further contraction of the German economy”. The German economy shrank by 0.3 percent in the first quarter of 2023, after a 0.5-percent contraction in the final quarter of 2022. Two straight quarters of contraction meets the technical definition for a recession. — AFP



The first ticket sold to Disneyland, sold in 1955 for USD \$1, is displayed during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives, at the Disney Studio lot, in Burbank, California.



Early Disney artifacts are displayed during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives — AFP photos



An early Mickey Mouse alarm clock is displayed during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives.

Disney

cracks open vast archive for centennial celebrations

WALT DISNEY ARCHIVES

From princess costumes and cute character sketches to century-old toys, photos and documents, Disney's backrooms and warehouses are stacked to the rafters with "hundreds of millions" of filmmaking treasures, its archivists say. In celebration of the company's upcoming centennial—officially marked on October 16 -- Disney recently allowed a glimpse into its vaults, hosting a media visit to its film studio lot in Burbank, near Los Angeles. "This is what we call the tip of the iceberg," said Walt Disney Archives director Becky Cline, before presenting artifacts ranging from the studio's founding legal document and the first Mickey Mouse cartoon script to costumes from the latest Marvel films.

Many more items are currently out touring the world, with "Disney100: The Exhibition" on display simultaneously in Munich and Philadelphia. More locations including London will be added soon. Paris is currently hosting an immersive, multi-sensory experience, centered around the friendships between Disney's iconic characters.

But a major portion of the studio's archives is in "five or six" warehouses "scattered around" the Los Angeles area, including larger items such as for-



Personal items displayed in Walt Disney's office during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives.

mer theme park ride vehicles and movie props, said archivist Nicole Carroll. "We make so much stuff, we're always looking for more space!" she said. Founded in 1970, the 30-strong team of archivists aim to keep a "small representation" of everything, Carroll explained.

For example, if a recently wrapped movie has 250 lavish costumes, including four or five for each of the heroes, the archive team will select "a couple of iconic looks from each character" for posterity. Even with this selective approach, every time a film wraps, "we could be adding hundreds of things" to

the archive, said Carroll.

'Cry'
Among the studio's most treasured memorabilia are the giant storybooks featured at the start of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and "Sleeping Beauty," and a crystal slipper from the live action version of Cinderella. Some items end up serving a practical purpose—an original snow globe from 1964's "Mary Poppins" was pulled from the archive and replicated by filmmakers creating the 2018 sequel.

Factor in photo and document ar-

chives containing first-edition cartoons, tickets to Disneyland's 1955 opening, plus corporate reports and press clippings, and the total collection extends to "hundreds of millions" of items, said Cline.

But perhaps the most hallowed space for Disney obsessives is located right on the Burbank lot—founder Walt Disney's personal offices, from which he managed his entertainment empire from 1940 until his death in 1966.

A painstaking inventory of every item he left behind was taken, right down to the exact resting angle of his books, including volumes on Nikola Tesla, Salvador Dali and trains. Just under a decade ago, those offices were restored by Walt Disney Archives employees.

They now contain everything from unfinished plans for theme parks to figurines of beloved fairy tale characters. And, of course, several Oscars. Just a few tour groups are admitted each year to this space, considered sacred by cognoscenti of a company renowned for the almost unparalleled obsession of its fandom. "People come in and cry at this amazing human," said tour guide Laura Sanchez. "They get to walk in the past."—AFP



The first ticket sold to Disneyland, sold in 1955 for USD \$1, is displayed during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives.



The first ticket sold to Shanghai Disney Resort is displayed during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives.



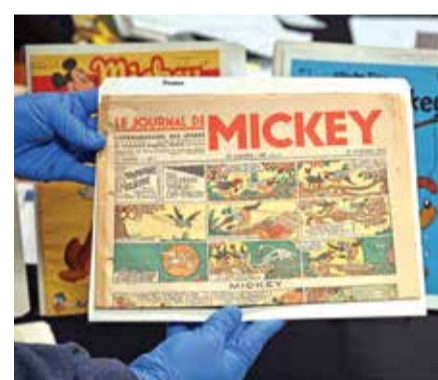
The piano in Walt Disney's office during a media tour of the the Walt Disney Archives.



An early Mickey Mouse watch is displayed during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives.



The intersection of Dopey Drive and Mickey Ave is seen during a media tour of the Disney Studio and Walt Disney Archives.



"The Journal de Mickey," the first French-language Mickey Mouse comic, published in 1934, is displayed during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives.



A Mickey Mouse statue is displayed in Walt Disney's office during a media tour of the the Walt Disney Archives.



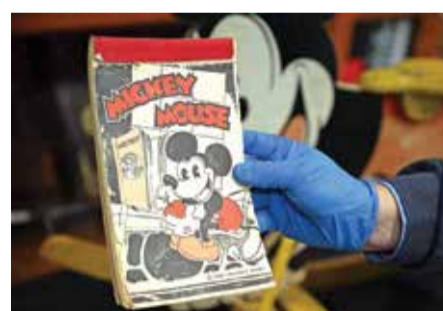
A large painting of Walt Disney hangs in the hallway outside his office during a media tour the Walt Disney Archives.



Walt Disney's desk in his private office during a media tour of the Disney Studio and Walt Disney Archives.



The Seven Dwarfs hold up the roof of the Team Disney Building overlooking the Disney Legends Plaza during a media tour of the Disney Studio and Walt Disney Archives.



An early Mickey Mouse notepad is displayed during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives.



Early Mickey Mouse figurines are displayed during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives.



Walt Disney is seen on a mock up of a television during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives.



Disney merchandise from 1920's-1930's is displayed during a media tour of the Walt Disney Archives.

Lifestyle



View of the work "Dzikamunhenga 3" by artist Masimba Hwati, part of the O Quilombismo exhibition at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW-House of the Cultures of the World) museum in Berlin.



View of the works "Kilombo: Piwunchen" by artist Bernardo Oyarzun (left) and "Blind Map" by artist Truong Cong Tung, part of the O Quilombismo exhibition at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW-House of the Cultures of the World) museum in Berlin.



View of the work "Table of Goods" by artist Grada Kilomba, part of the O Quilombismo exhibition.

AFRICAN-BORN DIRECTOR'S NEW VISION FOR BERLIN CULTURAL MAGNET

One of the rare African-born figures to head a German cultural institution, Bonaventure Ndikung is aiming to highlight post-colonial multiculturalism at a Berlin arts centre with its roots in Western hegemony. The "Haus der Kulturen der Welt" (House of World Cultures), or HKW, was built by the Americans in 1956 during the Cold War for propaganda purposes, at a time when Germany was still divided.



Cameroon-born artistic director Bonaventure Ndikung poses in front of the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW-House of the Cultures of the World) museum in Berlin.

New director Ndikung said it had been located "strategically" so that people on the other side of the Berlin Wall, in the then communist East, could see it. This was "representing freedom" but "from the Western perspective", the 46-year-old told AFP. Now Ndikung, born in Cameroon before coming to study in Germany 26 years ago, wants to transform it into a place filled with "different cultures of the world".

The centre, by the river Spree, is known locally as the "pregnant oyster"

due to its sweeping, curved roof. It does not have its own collections but is home to exhibition rooms and a 1,000-seat auditorium. It reopened in June after renovations, and Ndikung's first project "Quilombismo" fits in with his aims of expanding the centre's offerings.

The exhibition takes its name from the Brazilian term "Quilombo", referring to the communities formed in the 17th century by African slaves, who fled to remote parts of the South American country. Throughout the summer, there will also be performances, concerts, films, discussions and an exhibition of contemporary art from post-colonial societies across Africa, the Americas, Asia and Oceania.

'Rethink the space'

"We have been trying to... rethink the space. We invited artists to paint walls... even the floor," Ndikung said. And part of the "Quilombismo" exhibition can be

found glued to the floor—African braids laced together, a symbol of liberation for black people, which was created by Zimbabwean artist Nontsikelelo Mutiti. According to Ndikung, African slaves on plantations sometimes plaited their hair in certain ways as a kind of coded message to those seeking to escape, showing them which direction to head.

His quest for aestheticism is reflected in his appearance: with a colorful suit and headgear, as well as huge rings on his fingers, he rarely goes unnoticed. During his interview with AFP, Ndikung was wearing a green scarf and cap, a blue-ish jacket and big, sky-blue shoes. With a doctorate in medical biology, he used to work as an engineer before devoting himself to art.

In 2010, he founded the Savvy gallery in Berlin, bringing together art from the West and elsewhere, and in 2017 was one of the curators of Documenta, a prestigious contemporary art event in

the German city of Kassel. Convinced of the belief that history "has been written by a particular type of people, mostly white and men," Ndikung has had all the rooms in the HKW renamed after women. These are figures who have "done something important in the advancement of the world" but were "erased" from history, he added. Among them is Frenchwoman Paulette Nardal, born in Martinique in 1896. She helped inspire the creation of the "negritude" movement, which aimed to develop black literary consciousness, and was the first black woman to study at the Sorbonne in Paris.

Reassessing history

Ndikung's appointment at the HKW comes as awareness grows in Germany about its colonial past, which has long been overshadowed by the atrocities committed during the era of Adolf Hitler's Nazis. Berlin has in recent years

started returning looted objects to African countries which it occupied in the early 20th century—Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Namibia and Cameroon. "It's long overdue," said Ndikung.

He was born in Cameroon's capital, Yaounde, into an anglophone family. The country is majority francophone but also home to an anglophone minority and has faced deadly unrest in English-speaking areas, where armed insurgents are fighting to establish an independent homeland. One of his dreams is to open a museum in Cameroon "bringing together historical and contemporary objects" from different countries, he said. He would love to locate it in Bamenda, the capital of Cameroon's restive Northwest region. "But there is a war in Bamenda, so I can't," he says.—AFP



The building housing the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW-House of the Cultures of the World) museum is reflected in a water basin, in Berlin.



Cameroon-born artistic director Bonaventure Ndikung poses in front of the work "Transatlantic Stargate" by artists Antonio Jose Guzman and Iva Jankovic, part of the O Quilombismo exhibition at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW-House of the Cultures of the World) museum in Berlin.— AFP photos

EUROVISION
SONG CONTEST
2024

Malmö chosen to host 2024 Eurovision Song contest

The southern Swedish city of Malmö has been chosen to host the 2024 Eurovision Song contest on May 7-11, Swedish public broadcaster STV said on Friday. "Malmö is a creative city with a rich cultural life that can provide a music festival for the whole of Europe," said STV director general Hanne Stjerne. Eurovision has a huge following in Sweden. Next year, the Nordic nation will be staging it for the seventh time after Swedish singer Loreen won this year's contest, hosted by Britain on behalf of war-torn Ukraine. The 2024 event coincides with the 50th anniversary of ABBA's Eurovision victory—Sweden's first—with their breakthrough hit "Waterloo".

Malmö, Sweden's third largest city, has hosted Eurovision twice in the past, in 1992 and 2013. The European Broadcasting Union (EBU), which runs Eurovision, said it was "thrilled" that Malmö had been selected by the STV and EBU. "We're excited to be returning to this vibrant and dynamic city, which has demonstrated it has the venues and infrastructure that are perfect for staging the world's largest live music event," Eurovision chief supervisor Martin Osterdahl said.

Swedish singer Loreen, who had already won Eurovision in 2012, became in 2023 the first woman to be win the eccentric, much-loved song competition twice. She was only the second person to do so, after Johnny Logan for Ireland in the 1980s. Eurovision was launched in 1956 and has become hugely popular. This year's contest was watched by 162 million TV viewers, the BBC said.—AFP

No charges in Britney Spears incident with Wembanyama security

The member of NBA top draft pick Victor Wembanyama's security detail who allegedly struck pop star Britney Spears in the face will not be charged, Las Vegas police said Friday. Wembanyama is in Las Vegas this week ahead of his first game in the NBA Summer League, and was heading to a restaurant Wednesday night when he was spotted by fans—and Spears. Media reports said that Spears was pushed away by Wembanyama's entourage, and the singer posted on Instagram that a security guard "backhanded me in the

face... Nearly knocking me down and causing my glasses (to fall) off my face."

Spears's husband Sam Asghari said the incident was "violent" and "out of control," posting on social media that his wife had been "hit in the face." But the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department said Friday that officers had concluded their "investigation of the alleged battery." "No charges will be filed against the person involved," said a statement.

Wembanyama, who is due to make his much-hyped debut against Charlotte

on Friday evening, told reporters he only heard hours later Wednesday that Spears was involved. "I don't know with how much force but security pushed her away and I didn't stop to look so I kept walking and enjoyed a nice dinner," said the Frenchman. Spears said she had simply wanted to greet and congratulate the player.—AFP

This combination of pictures shows US singer Britney Spears and French basketball player Victor Wembanyama.—AFP



Lost Rembrandt portraits fetch more than £11 million at auction

The last known pair of Rembrandt portraits in private hands sold for more than £11 million (\$14 million) at Christie's in London on Thursday—nearly 200 years after they first went under the hammer at the auction house. The paintings, which are thought to date from 1635, had been expected to fetch between £5 million and £8 million as part of Christie's "Old Masters" sale.

But the hammer came down at £11,235,000, the auction house said in a statement. The 20-centimetre high (eight-inch) oval portraits depict an elderly plumber named Jan Willemsz van der Pluym and his wife Jaapgen Carels. The couple, painted in an unusually intimate style for Rembrandt, were friends of the artist's family and hailed from his hometown of Leiden in the Netherlands.

Henry Pettifer, international deputy chairman of Old Master Paintings at Christie's, told AFP in Amsterdam last month that he was "stopped in his tracks" when he first saw the portraits. "I was really staggered to discover that the pictures had never really been researched and never been addressed in any of the literature on Rembrandt over

the course of 200 years." An ancestor of the current owners bought the paintings at auction at Christie's in 1824, where they were listed as Rembrandts, and they have remained in the same collection ever since. "They've been sitting quietly and enjoyed by the owner's family over the course of two centuries... rather casually enjoying them very much," said Pettifer.

After spotting them, "forensic" work began on verifying that they were genuine Rembrandts, including scientific analysis by art experts from Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum. The paintings are the smallest known portraits by the 17th century Dutch master, who was better known for much larger works commissioned by wealthy families.—AFP



Tennis saga by 'Call Me by Your Name' director to open Venice film festival

The Venice Film Festival will open in August with the premiere of "Challengers", a tennis saga by Italy's Luca Guadagnino who a year earlier won the best director award for his cannibal film starring Timothée Chalamet. "Challengers" is not in competition for best film, but kicks off the glitzy cinema festival, the world's oldest, running from August 30 to September 9, organizers said Thursday. Guadagnino latest oeuvre touches on themes of "love, friendship, and male rivalry," festival director Alberto Barbera said in a statement. His 2017 film "Call Me by your Name" made a star of the Franco-American actor Chalamet.

US actress Zendaya is cast as a former tennis prodigy turned coach married to a fading champion played by Mike Faist ("West Side Story"), who must face Patrick, his former best friend and his wife's ex-boyfriend, played by Josh O'Connor ("The Crown"). Last year, Guadagnino, 51, presented his film "Bones and All" at the festival, starring Chalamet as one of two young cannibals on a bloody road trip through the United States, which earned him the Silver Lion directing prize.—AFP



British actress Lily James (left), US rapper Cardi B and US singer Camilla Cabello (second right) attend the show by Fendi during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris.



US singer Belcalis Marlenis Almanzar Cephus aka Cardi B (center) poses as she leaves after attending the Fendi runway during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris.

Kim Jones focuses on draping for Fendi Haute Couture fall 2023



Ahead of Fendi's Haute Couture Fall 2023 show, Kim Jones released a statement that set the tone — and expectation — for his latest collection. "This season, we wanted to concentrate on the achievement of fluidity, drape and shape through couture techniques, bringing these elements together with the attitude of today," he wrote in the show notes.

Each Fall 2023 Haute Couture design toys with the technique, showcasing its versatility and possibility by iterating. The opening look boasts an asymmetrical shape and an extended flute sleeve, done in a light nude hue. It's followed by a teal number, cinched at the waist and draped with silk. Jones will create structure with bandage-like details across the bodice, outlining the silhouette of whoever's wearing it. Colors range from champagne to dark



British-australian actress Naomi Watts (left) and US actress Zoe Saldana speak together ahead of the show by Fendi for the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris.



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



chocolate and tomato red, the palette pulled "from flesh tones as well as that of stones: black diamonds, rubies, sapphires," Jones explained in the show notes. "There is a play of soft and hard, flesh and stone."

On the runway, models carried matching minaudieres with most looks and held them, very specifically, in the middle of their chest, as if over their hearts. They also showcased the latest high jewelry collection by Delfina Delettrez Fendi, dubbed Fendi Triptych, which fuses rigid and orderly elements pulled from Roman architecture with more abstract and imperfect ones from the natural world. "There's an obsessive precision you need to make jewelry like this, such small objects that have such strength, meaning and personality," Delettrez Fendi said, in a statement. "And yet, in the end, they have a direct and intimate relationship to the body; they are a profound and personal extension of the woman." —www.fashionista.com



Sports

Charleston wins men's 100m at athletics championships

Richardson triumphs in women's 100 meters



EUGENE: JT Smith and Cravont Charleston compete in the Men's 100m Semi Final during the 2023 USATF Outdoor Championships on July 07, 2023.- AFP

EUGENE: Cravont Charleston surged past 2019 world champion Christian Coleman to win the men's 100m at the US athletics championships on Friday as Sha'Carri Richardson won the women's 100m to book her long anticipated World Championships berth. The 25-year-old Charleston, who had never made it to the 100m final at a US championships before, clocked 9.95sec to edge Coleman by one one-hundredth of a second with reigning 200m world champion Noah Lyles third in 10.00sec. "Just keep running," Charleston said of his mindset as he trailed early in the race. "That's what I tried to do."

The trio will join reigning world champion Fred Kerley in the event at the World Championships in Budapest in August, trying to repeat the US sweep at last year's worlds in Eugene. The two other members of the 2022 podium won't be there. Marvin Bracy-Williams's hopes of improving on his world silver evaporated when he was injured in the heats and failed to advance while bronze medalist Trayvon Bromell, racing through a painful bone spur on his right heel, finished sixth in the final and said he would soon be seeking surgery.

Richardson, meanwhile, will spearhead the US women's 100m challenge after booking her first world championships berth with an emotional vic-

tory in 10.82. She'd set a personal best of 10.71 in Thursday's heats - which stood as the top time in the world this year for a day until Shericka Jackson's 10.65 to win at the Jamaican championships on Friday.

Richardson, who had posted a 10.75 in the semi-finals, was the picture of determination on the start line, tossing away her bright red wig to reveal long braids before settling into the starting blocks. A slow start left her some work to do, but she pulled away late to leave Brittany Brown second on 10.90sec with Tamari Davis third in 10.99. "I'm ready mentally, physically and emotionally, and I'm here to stay," Richardson told broadcaster NBC after she had climbed into the stands to embrace a number of people.

'Not back, better'

The win was a vindication of sorts for Richardson, who was infamously barred from the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021 after testing positive for marijuana. She then saw her hopes of competing for a medal at last year's World Championships vanish when she bombed out of the US trials. "I'm not back," Richardson said. "I'm better." In other events, Anna Hall grabbed a dominant victory in the hep-

tathlon with a score of 6,677 points - more than 300 points clear of runner-up Taliyah Brooks's 6,319.

Hall said she was satisfied with the score given that she didn't break training for the meet, and she's still hoping she can achieve her season aim of breaking 7,000 points in Budapest and improve on the world bronze she won last year. Donald Scott won the men's triple jump with a leap of 17.22m, with Will Claye second at 16.98m. Harrison Williams won the decathlon with a total of 8,630 points and Vashiti Cunningham won the women's high jump with a clearance of 1.91m. Former world record-holder Keni Harrison smoothly led the way into the 100m hurdles semi-finals with a time of 12.50sec. Nia Ali, the 2019 world champion, was second-quickest in 12.53.

Rai Benjamin, silver medalist at the Tokyo Olympics as well as the 2019 and 2022 World Championships, set the pace in the men's 400m hurdles heats with a time of 49.05. With reigning world champion and world record-holder Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone focusing on the 400m flat, former 400m hurdles world record-holder Dalilah Muhammad - an Olympic gold medalist in 2016 and world champion in 2019 - topped the first-round times in 54.56. McLaughlin-Levrone led the way into the 400m final with a time of 49.60 in the semis. — AFP

Philipsen denies Cavendish Tour stage record

BORDEAUX: Jasper Philipsen won his third stage of the Tour de France in Bordeaux on Friday, overtaking a bitterly disappointed Mark Cavendish in a last-gasp effort after a see-saw struggle to the line. The 38-year-old Cavendish appeared to be about to bag a record-breaking 35th career stage win on the Tour de France when he took the lead, but Philipsen then burst back past him to win by a bike length at the line.

Cavendish later claimed he had had a technical issue in the finale. "I'm bitterly disappointed there, like majorly disappointed," said Cavendish. "When I stood up to sprint it slipped a couple of gears so I sat down, then it slipped back and I stood up again and the same thing happened," he said. Already dressed in the sprint points green jersey, Philipsen raised three fingers in celebration. Behind the Belgian and Cavendish came Biniam Girmay in third.

The Eritrean was left waving a hand in remonstrance after being cut off by the winner, who veered slightly in the high-speed finale when leaping into action as he noticed Cavendish surge ahead. Philipsen was graceful in victory, praising Cavendish as an all-time great. "Cavendish was really fast and I would have loved to see him win," he said. "When he shot past me I thought, that's incredible, he's going to get his 35th win. So I was happy that I managed to catch him and go past him, he (Cavendish) is the

greatest sprinter off all time," he said. The 25-year-old Philipsen has won all three stages that ended in bunch sprints and on the 2km long home straight his teammate Mathieu van der Poel again led the Belgian into pole position. Huge crowds braved the baking heat along the banks of the Garonne river in Bordeaux believing they would witness a vintage Cavendish set an all-time record of 35 stage wins. The last time the Tour de France ended in downtown Bordeaux was 2010, when Cavendish was in his glorious prime, and where he produced his trademark victory roar when he won that stage.

On Friday's seventh stage of this Tour they instead witnessed Cavendish's clever bid denied at the death as he crossed the line cursing. Girmay, of the Intermarche outfit, would have become the first Black African to win a stage but the 23-year-old also missed out narrowly as he rounded out the podium. In the overall standings defending champion Jonas Vingegaard of Denmark retained the leader's yellow jersey ahead of Slovenia's two-time champion Tadej Pogacar of the UAE Team.

Vingegaard said after his first day in yellow that he had enjoyed the hot conditions as the race ran through the region's world famous vineyards. He was also upbeat after his infernal struggle Thursday with Pogacar in the Pyrenees. "It's always better to be 25sec ahead than to be 25 behind," he insisted. "To be honest we expected to be a bit behind at this stage so we have to be happy. "Last year all my best days came in the heat so I'm hoping the rest of the race is run in a heatwave, too." Pogacar also seemed relaxed and happy. "The final 50km, we were rolling full gas and it was very hot out there, but that was much easier than the last two days, believe me," he said. — AFP



LIMOGES: Lidl -Trek's Danish rider Mads Pedersen (left) cycles to the finish line ahead of Jumbo-Visma's Belgian rider Wout Van Aert (2nd left), Team Jayco Alula's Dutch rider Dylan Groenewegen (3rd left) and Alpecin-Deceuninck's Belgian rider Jasper Philipsen (right) to win the 8th stage of the 110th edition of the Tour de France cycling race on July 8, 2023. — AFP

Verstappen denies Norris for British Grand Prix pole

SILVERSTONE: Max Verstappen demonstrated his and Red Bull's supremacy with dramatic effect on Saturday when he claimed a fifth consecutive pole position by topping qualifying for the British Grand Prix. The double world champion and runaway series leader clocked a late best lap time to outpace McLaren's British driver Lando Norris by two-tenths of a second.

Australian rookie Oscar Piastri was third fastest in the second McLaren ahead of the Ferraris of Charles Leclerc and Carlos Sainz and the Mercedes of George Russell and seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton. "It has been a bit of a crazy qualifying and pretty hectic," said Verstappen of the wet and dry session run in changeable conditions. "But we stuck to our plans and I am very happy to have pole position."

As he celebrated, his Red Bull team-mate Sergio Perez, who trails him by 81 points in the drivers' title race, suffered a fifth early exit this season in Q1. Norris who briefly held provisional pole position claimed his third front row career start. "This makes up for everything," he said. "But it's always Max - he ruins everything for everyone too!" Williams' Alex Albon was eighth ahead of two-time champion Fernando Alonso

and Pierre Gasly of Alpine. After heavy rain, the track was damp as the first qualifying session began with Russell and Hamilton, on slicks, leading the way.

The Ferraris were both on intermediates along with the Haas drivers and Logan Sargeant as Russell set the first time before Hamilton spun into gravel at Stowe and recovered. As he did, Verstappen went top only to have his lap deleted for exceeding track limits, Alonso taking over as fastest while those on 'inters' switched to slicks. With 10 minutes to go, rain fell again, but not sufficiently to persuade a switch from slicks as Verstappen regained the ascendancy in 1:30.719 ahead of Alonso and Leclerc. "Rain everywhere," reported Russell, while

Albon had a fast lap deleted for track limits, leaving him 20th and last in his Williams, after dazzling in dry conditions in practice. Team-mate American rookie Sargeant was 18th in a car that had the potential to qualify in the top ten. With three minutes remaining, the action was red-flagged when Kevin Magnussen parked his Haas on track, close to the pits entry. This led to a delay before, with Perez and Albon at the head of a queue, a re-start was scheduled - during which Verstappen pulled out, but hit the pit wall and damaged his car's front wing. After repairs, he was back out in a congested exit queue before a wild finish on a rapidly drying track saw Norris go top ahead of Leclerc and Russell. — AFP



SILVERSTONE: Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen drives during the third practice session ahead of the Formula One British Grand Prix at the Silverstone motor racing circuit on July 8, 2023. — AFP

News in brief

Valencia sign Pepelu

BARCELONA: Valencia signed midfielder Pepelu for five million euros (\$5.5 million) on Saturday, a year after the Spaniard signed a 10-year deal with Levante. The 24-year-old, who came through Levante's youth system, stayed with them after they were relegated in 2022, penning a deal until 2032 last June and posing with a shirt featuring the infinity symbol. However next season Pepelu will play for city rivals Valencia, after Ruben Baraja's side confirmed their top flight status on the final day of the season following a lengthy relegation battle. Pepelu could not help Levante return to La Liga as they lost to Alaves in the second division play-off final in June. "Pepelu" will wear Valencia's shirt for the next five seasons," said the purchasing club in a statement, confirming he has a 100 million euro release clause in his contract. — AFP

Three protesters charged

LONDON: London police have charged three people with aggravated trespass over two incidents at the Wimbledon tennis tournament, when climate protesters interrupted play and scattered jigsaw pieces on the court. Deborah Wilde, 68, Simon Milner-Edwards, 66, and William Ward, 66, were released on bail to appear at London's City of Westminster Magistrates court next month. Both incidents took place on Wednesday and involved members of the Just Stop Oil campaign group, which has targeted major sporting events including the snooker World Championship and the Ashes cricket series. In the first incident, a man and a woman wearing "Just Stop Oil" T-shirts ran onto Court 18 during play and "discharged what is believed to be orange paper petals and jigsaw pieces," according to Metropolitan Police. Later, a man ran onto the same court to carry out a similar protest. They were all detained by security staff before being arrested by police and taken into custody. — AFP

PSG and Ugarte ink deal

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain on Friday completed the signing of Uruguay midfielder Manuel Ugarte from Portuguese club Sporting following the arrivals this week of Milan Skriniar and Marco Asensio. Ugarte, 22, has signed a five-year deal with the French champions who paid a transfer fee of 60 million euros (\$65.3 million) to ward off reported interest from Chelsea. The defensive midfielder began his career with Fenix in Montevideo before moving to Portugal to join Famalicao. He was soon snapped up by Sporting and spent the past two seasons with them. Ugarte was an unused member of the Uruguay squad at last year's World Cup. He is PSG's third recruit of the summer after Skriniar and Asensio signed on free transfers. France's 2018 World Cup-winning defender Lucas Hernandez is also expected to arrive as new coach Luis Enrique looks to strengthen his team. — AFP

Hamilton remains upbeat

SILVERSTONE: Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton stayed upbeat on Friday finishing 15th for Mercedes after second practice for this weekend's British Grand Prix. The 38-year-old Briton, who has won a record eight times at his home event, made light of his disappointment despite running with an updated front wing on his car in a windy and turbulent session. Defending double world champion Max Verstappen topped both practice sessions on Friday for Red Bull while both Mercedes men struggled, Hamilton 15th and team-mate George Russell 12th. "Balance is the big challenge here," said Hamilton. "It has been very windy, but I love it and it is one reason why this is the best circuit in the world. "We will be doing a lot of homework on the balance tonight and with Mick (Schumacher) in the 'sim' (simulator)." He added that he could not pretend that his car felt much improved with the latest upgrades. — AFP

Sports

Knee injury epidemic plagues women soccer ahead of WCup

Soul-searching as to what is causing these injuries

PARIS: The timely return of Alexia Putellas means the best player on the planet will feature at the Women's World Cup but a host of leading names will miss the party in Australia and New Zealand due to an ongoing plague of serious knee injuries. Spain's Putellas, 29, missed last year's European Championship in England after rupturing the anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee. She spent over nine months out but retained the Women's Ballon d'Or and The Best FIFA Women's Player award while absent before returning in April.

Putellas then played a part in Barcelona's recent UEFA Champions League triumph and has since come back into the Spain team in time for their World Cup campaign. She is one of the lucky ones. Holders the United States are diminished by the loss of Mallory Swanson to a torn patella tendon in her left knee, while midfielder Catarina Macario did not overcome a torn ACL in time. European champions England are without star striker Beth Mead and defender Leah Williamson, their captain, as both recover from a ruptured ACL.

Vivianne Miedema, the prolific Netherlands striker and Mead's partner, is missing too, having been out with the same injury since December. France's hopes were hit by the loss of Delphine Cascarino, the French league's best player last season, to a partial rupture of her right ACL. Prolific striker Marie-Antoinette Katoto did not make the squad after missing all of last season with a knee injury. Olympic champions Canada are without Ja-

nine Beckie, the ex-Manchester City player now with Portland Thorns.

'Seriously higher risk'

The World Cup will be a poorer spectacle without them, and the issue has led to much soul-searching as to what is causing these injuries. "It's an injury that can depend on many things," Putellas said in an interview with global players' union FIFPro. "It is only relatively recent that women's players have started to become professionals, and there has hardly been time to carry out these types of studies and learn a little more about the body of women's footballers." Female players have not just suddenly become vulnerable to knee injuries that can rule them out for many months. "The fact that females are at seriously higher risk than guys playing football has been recognized for a long time," Gordon Mackay, a Scottish knee surgeon, told AFP.

"It is multi-factorial, but there are lots of things that contribute to the risk factors," he said, citing the need to train on the right surfaces and have footwear geared specifically for women. Mackay put the incidence of ACL injuries in female players at "four times at least, maybe six times" that of males and says pelvic shape is also a contributing factor. Hormonal changes related to the menstrual cycle have been mentioned too as potentially increasing the risk. "It is very hard to address the fact there is biomechanically a bit of a gender difference," Mackay added. The focus is therefore on prevention. One recent

study by researchers in England suggested that kits and balls, as well as boots, needed to be better tailored towards women to optimize on-pitch safety. Sportswear giant Adidas, one of the main kit providers for teams at the World Cup, said it takes the issue "incredibly seriously". "We have a long-standing legacy in designing product by, with and for women athletes," it said when contacted by AFP. "Collaboration ensures our products are built for women, from concepting to testing."

'Difficult to swallow'

This World Cup will be the first to feature 32 teams as the sport continues to grow. It is just a shame that a huge month for women's football will go ahead without so many big names. "Not consistently having the best players on the pitch, particularly during the biggest moments the sport has to offer, also affects our game's ability to continuously leverage its growing popularity," acknowledged Alex Culvin, a former player and now FIFPro's head of strategy and research.

For the sidelined players themselves, the pain of injury may almost be matched by the hurt of watching without taking part. "It's difficult to see all the excitement around the tournament," Beckie told Canada's TSN 690 radio. "I am so excited for the tournament and for all these amazing players to have this platform to showcase their talent but at the same time it is difficult to swallow that I won't be there." — AFP



Midfielder Alexia Putellas

Pochettino ready to risk reputation at Chelsea

LONDON: Mauricio Pochettino is ready to "risk" his reputation at troubled Chelsea, but the new Blues boss won't be bolstered by a reunion with Harry Kane. Kane has been linked with a move away from Pochettino's former club Tottenham and a switch to Stamford Bridge could have suited both parties. Pochettino needs a top-class striker to improve on the club's dismal goal-scoring record last season and England captain Kane fits the bill perfectly.

Tottenham's record goalscorer, who rose to prominence under Pochettino, is keen to leave the north Londoners after failing in his bid to engineer a transfer to Manchester City two years ago. Linked with Bayern Munich and Manchester United, Kane's Tottenham contract expires next year, increasing the urgency to resolve his future. However, Tottenham chairman Daniel Levy might see the prospect of selling Kane to a London club, and one managed by the man he sacked in 2019, as a bridge too far.

Speaking at his first Chelsea press conference on Friday, Pochettino reacted with mock horror before breaking into a grin when he was asked if he would try to sign Kane. "Oh my God! No, I don't like to talk about players in another club, but you are talking about one of the greatest, one of the best strikers in the world," he said. "It's not fair to talk. Fans are not stupid, they are so clever and they know my relationship with him was always amazing."



LONDON: Chelsea's Argentinian head coach Mauricio Pochettino poses for a photograph with a Chelsea scarf beside the pitch at Stamford Bridge in London on July 7, 2023. — AFP

"I saw him when he was young, grow up and achieve all he was achieving and of course we have a great relationship. "At the moment we are thinking in different ways. We are not thinking about that (Kane)." If a blockbuster move for Kane is off the agenda, Pochettino has to look elsewhere to solve Chelsea's striker crisis. The Blues, who have sold German forward Kai Havertz to Arsenal, mustered just 38 goals in 38 Premier League games as they finished in 12th place. "We have to time to work. I think for sure we are going to add players that can score," Pochettino said. Pochettino was linked with a return to Tottenham before accepting Chelsea's offer. The 51-year-old spent five years at Tottenham, leading the club to their first Champions League final appearance just months before his surprise dismissal. — AFP

Messi's Inter Miami announce 'The Unveil'

MIAMI: Lionel Messi's next club, Inter Miami, announced it will hold a presentation event, called 'The Unveil', on July 16 at its home stadium. Argentine seven-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi said last month that he was moving to the Major League Soccer club after allowing his contract at Paris Saint-Germain to run out. "The major unveiling event will include exciting entertainment, speeches on the pitch and more," the club said in a press release, which did not mention Messi by name.

Messi, who won the World Cup with Argentina in December, is expected to be joined at Miami by his former Barcelona teammate and ex-Spain international midfielder Sergio Busquets and the pair could be presented together. The club recently appointed former Barcelona and Argentina coach Gerardo

"Tata" Martino to take charge of the team. Messi is expected to make his debut on July 21 against Mexican club Cruz Azul in the new Leagues Cup—a tournament between top flight clubs from MLS and the Mexican league. Inter Miami majority owner Jorge Mas has said the club could make "three to five signings" during the current transfer window. Inter Miami is at the bottom in MLS' Eastern Conference and ranked 28th of 29 clubs in the league. Martino said, upon his appointment, that he had spoken to Messi and Busquets about their impending move to the MLS club.

"Sometimes in our world you associate United States and Miami with holidays. And it's not that. They are coming to compete. "They are coming from winning world titles, Spanish league titles. They are not going to relax. They will compete because it is in their blood," he said. "The Unveil" will be conducted at the club's DRV PNK Stadium in Fort Lauderdale, north of Miami. Former England and Manchester United midfielder David Beckham, a co-owner of the club, is also likely to appear at the event. — AFP

Kuwait wins 4 medals at Pan Arab Games

ALGIERS: Abdulrahman Al-Azmi clinched Kuwait's fourth medal at the Pan Arab Games on Thursday, taking a bronze after finishing third in the men's javelin throw with a distance of 70.83m covered. Team Kuwait have accomplished two silver and two bronze medals thus far in the regional tournament hosted by the Algerian coastal city of Oran which began yesterday.

Abdelhadi Mohamed and Fatma Dahham together progressed from the badminton mixed doubles qualifiers to the following round, beating a Tunisian duo. Yesterday, Yaqoub Al-Yoha and Issa Al-Zankawi won a silver medal each in the 110m hurdles race and men's discus throw, respectively, with Madawi Al-Shemmari clinching the women's 100m sprint bronze. Some 32 Kuwaitis, men and women, are competing in the event across six different disciplines. — KUNA



David de Gea leaves United after 12 years

MANCHESTER: David de Gea announced his exit from Manchester United on Saturday after 12 years as the club's number one goalkeeper. The Spaniard last season overtook Peter Schmeichel to record the most clean sheets in the club's history and was crowned players' and fans' player of the year four times. But a string of high-profile errors towards the end of the campaign drew criticism and the 32-year-old struggled to adapt to manager Erik ten Hag's preferred style of playing out from the back.

In a message on social media, De Gea thanked United fans for their support, but said: "Now, it's the right time to undertake a new challenge, to push myself again in new surroundings. "Manchester will always be in my heart, Manchester has shaped me and will never leave me." De Gea's deal expired at the end of June, with reports the player had agreed a contract extension only for the club to withdraw that offer and come back with reduced terms.

The Red Devils are now set to move for Inter Milan keeper Andre Onana, who previously played under Ten Hag at Ajax. De Gea made 545 appearances and kept 190 clean sheets after being signed by Alex Ferguson in 2011. His departure means there are no players left at Old Trafford who have won the Premier League - the last title success was in Ferguson's final season in charge, in 2012/13. De Gea also won the FA Cup in 2016, two League Cups and the Europa League.

Madrid move collapse

The Spaniard often shone despite United's long slump in the post-Ferguson years. His personal trophy haul could have been much greater but for the late collapse of a move to Real Madrid in 2015 due to paperwork not being completed before the transfer deadline. "I would like to express my unwavering gratitude and appreciation for the love from the last 12 years," he said in his message.

"We've achieved a lot since my dear Sir Alex Ferguson brought me to this club. "I took incredible pride every time I pulled on this shirt, to lead the team, to represent this institution, the biggest club in the world was an honor only bestowed upon a few lucky footballers." Ten Hag thanked De Gea for his service and performances during his first season at the club after he picked up the Golden Glove for most Premier League clean sheets. "It takes great quality and character to reach the level of even playing one game for Manchester United," he said.

"To do it 545 times over 12 years is a special achievement, particularly in the goalkeeping position where every game puts you in the spotlight. "To have won player of the year awards from both the fans and his team-mates, each on four occasions, shows the level of his performance and he will always be remembered as one of the very best goalkeepers in the history of the club." But despite an impressive season overall, De Gea's campaign ended on a low note. He was judged to be at fault for the decisive goal in United's 2-1 FA Cup final defeat to Manchester City and in a Europa League quarter-final exit to Sevilla. — 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
Khaldiya	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 574148, has changed my name as Nisha Vishwanath Ganiga vide affidavit dated 22-04-2023, sworn before notary A.I.Kareem., Mangalore. (#3825) 06-07-2023

I, Fathima Muneeb holder of Indian Passport No. V1965265, having permanent address 23-2-519/1, Hy-

derabad, 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 hence-

forth 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

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Medvedev beats friend Fucsovics

Kvitova remains on track for 3rd Wimbledon title



WIMBLEDON: Russia's Daniil Medvedev returns the ball to Hungary's Marton Fucsovics during their men's singles tennis match on the sixth day of the 2023 Wimbledon Championships. (Inset) Czech Republic's Petra Kvitova returns the ball to Serbia's Natalija Stevanovic during their women's singles tennis match on the sixth day of the 2023 Wimbledon Championships on July 8, 2023. — AFP

LONDON: World number three Daniil Medvedev defeated close friend Marton Fucsovics to reach the Wimbledon last 16 for the second time on Saturday. Medvedev came through 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 against the muscular 67th-ranked Hungarian, recording his best Slam performance this year after a third-round exit at the Australian Open and first-round loss at the French Open.

Fucsovics, a quarter-finalist in 2021, saw his faltering challenge unravel when broken early in the fourth set, before calling a medical time-out to treat a right foot injury. Despite that setback, he still made Medvedev work for the victory, saving a clutch of match points before the third seed prevailed. "It was a very tough match," said the 27-year-old former US Open champion. "Marton plays well on grass and has made the quarter-finals here, which I haven't done. "I was more decisive after the first set, saved some break points and I'm happy to be through."

He added: "I want to do well here. It's my worst Grand Slam in terms of results so I have a big motivation to do well here." Medvedev, who was banned from Wimbledon in 2022 following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, will face either US 16th seed Tommy Paul or unseeded Jiri Lehecka of the Czech Republic for a place in the quarter-finals.

Two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova stayed on track for a third title by beating Serbian qualifier Natalija Stevanovic 6-3, 7-5 on Saturday. The Czech former world number two has pedigree on grass but has only made it past the third round once since she claimed her second title at the All England Club in 2014. The ninth seed, who warmed up for Wimbledon by win-

ning the WTA tournament on grass in Berlin last month, swapped early breaks with Stevanovic but broke again to love in the sixth game, which proved decisive.

Both players were vulnerable on serve in the second set and were locked at 4-4 after a fourth break. World number 225 Stevanovic held to edge ahead 5-4 before rain swept across the courts, forcing a lengthy delay. When they returned, Kvitova won 10 consecutive points but she struggled to close the deal against stubborn Stevanovic before finally sealing the victory on her fourth match point. "I love playing on grass, for sure," said Kvitova. "When my serve is working I love it even more. "I don't think it was the case today but somehow I found a way, which I'm very happy with."

Djokovic beats Wawrinka

Meanwhile, Novak Djokovic made the Wimbledon fourth round for the 15th time on Friday, beating old rival Stan Wawrinka and a night-time curfew as Andy Murray hinted his All England Club days may be over. Djokovic, chasing a record-equalling eighth Wimbledon title and 24th career Grand Slam crown, came through 6-3, 6-1, 7-6 (7/5) against the 38-year-old Wawrinka. World number two Djokovic will face Poland's Hubert Hurkacz, who he has defeated five times in as many meetings, for a place in the quarter-finals.

Friday's win was Djokovic's 21st in 27 meetings with Wawrinka, a three-time major champion who famously defeated the Serb in the 2015 French Open and 2016 US Open finals. Djokovic never faced a break point under the Centre Court roof and completed victory just 15 minutes before the 11pm All England Club curfew kicked in otherwise they would have had to return on Saturday.

The 20-year-old Alcaraz will face Chile's Nicolas Jarry for a spot in the last 16. Murray admitted he doesn't know if he will be back at Wimbledon after going down 7-6 (7/3), 6-7 (2/7), 4-6, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 to fifth-ranked Stefanos Tsitsipas in a four-hour 40-minute second round epic. The 36-year-old has not made the second week of a Grand Slam since reaching the quarter-finals at Wimbledon in 2017. "I don't know," said former world number one Murray when asked if he would be back in 2024.

"Motivation is obviously a big thing. Continuing having early losses in tournaments like this don't necessarily help with that." Tsitsipas fired 90 winners past Murray and goes on to face Laslo Djere of Serbia for a place in the last 16. "It's never easy against Andy. Everyone loves him here," said the 24-year-old Greek. Murray had been ahead two sets to one when the match was halted on Thursday due to the tournament curfew. However, he was unable to maintain the momentum on Friday despite not dropping serve in the match until the third game of the decider.

Medvedev, Rune through

Men's third seed Daniil Medvedev returned to complete his second-round clash against Adrian Panatta, the Frenchman who defeated him at Wimbledon five years ago. The mercurial Russian was two sets and 4-4 ahead when play was halted on day four but quickly wrapped up victory in a third set tie-break. Danish sixth seed Holger Rune reached the third round for the first time, brushing aside Spain's Roberto Carballes Baena 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4.

Seventh seeded Andrey Rublev of Russia and Italian

eighth-seed Jannik Sinner made the last 16 with wins over David Goffin and Quentin Halys respectively. World number one Iga Swiatek, the US Open and French Open champion, went through to the last 16 with a 6-2, 7-5 win over Petra Martic and next faces 14th-ranked Belinda Bencic. Victory in that clash will give the 22-year-old Pole a place in the quarter-finals for the first time.

Ukraine v Belarus

Second seed Aryna Sabalenka recovered from a set down to beat Varvara Gracheva, who recently switched nationality from Russia to France, 2-6, 7-5, 6-2. Fifth-seeded Caroline Garcia became the fourth top 10 woman to be knocked out when she committed 53 unforced errors in a 7-6 (7/0), 4-6, 7-5 loss to Marie Bouzkova of the Czech Republic. Victoria Azarenka, twice a semi-finalist, made the last 16 when she brushed aside Russia's Daria Kasatkina. She will face Elina Svitolina who will again refuse to shake hands with her Belarusian rival in protest at the country's support of Russia in the invasion of Ukraine. "For me it's a big motivation and for my country as well. A lot of Ukrainians will be watching, will be supporting me. I will go out there and put the fighting spirit on," said Svitolina.

Fellow Ukrainian Lesia Tsurenko triumphed in the longest-ever tiebreak in a Grand Slam women's singles match. The deciding breaker stretched to a record 38 points as the 34-year-old defeated Ana Bogdan 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (20/18) having saved five match points and converting a seventh match point of her own. Former US Open champion Bianca Andreescu came back from 2-5 down in the final set to defeat Ukraine's Anhelina Kalinina 6-2, 4-6, 7-6 (10/7). — AFP

Wembanyama gets reality check in NBA Summer League

LAS VEGAS: NBA top draft pick Victor Wembanyama delivered a lackluster performance in his long-awaited San Antonio debut, struggling for long stretches as the Spurs defeated Charlotte 76-68 in an NBA Summer League contest Friday. The 19-year-old French prodigy, who stands 7-foot-4 (2.24m), knows he has a lot to learn to live up to his hype as the NBA's best prospect since LeBron James some 20 years ago.

Wembanyama made only 2-of-13 shots from the floor, just 1-of-6 from 3-point range, and finished with nine points, eight rebounds, five blocked shots and three assists in just over 27 minutes on the court. "Honestly, I really didn't know what I was doing on the court tonight," Wembanyama said. "But I'm trying to learn for the next games and the important (thing) is to be ready for the season."

After his first taste of on-court life in the NBA, coming against his fellow young talents and newcomers, Wembanyama learned he needs to move faster and react better when plays are called. "The hardest for me was understanding—sometimes I was off with reading the plays and the calls," he said. "The biggest improvement I've got to do, it's being ready to react to the plays that were called by the point guard. Stay connected."



LAS VEGAS: San Antonio Spurs' Victor Wembanyama deflects a shot during the NBA Summer League game between the San Antonio Spurs and Charlotte Hornets on July 7, 2023. — AFP

A sellout crowd of 17,500 spectators jammed the Thomas & Mack Arena to watch Wembanyama wear a Spurs jersey for the first time.

"Special moment, really special, to wear that jersey for the first time. It's really an honor," Wembanyama said. "Overall, I'm glad we won this game. There's no better way to start for a premiere." His five blocked shots were the most by a Spurs player in a Summer League game since 2018, a sign his NBA education is already paying some dividends. "Going to get acclimated to the NBA style of play," he said. "Next time I'm going to do better. I hope to do better every time. "I'm trying to learn as much

as I can as quickly as possible to be ready for the start of the season."

Wembanyama, expected to play again Sunday against Portland, will have pre-season training camp and tuneup games before the Spurs begin the regular season in October. "We have to take a patient approach with him," Spurs general manager Brian Wright said during ESPN's telecast. "He's extremely unselfish, a really good passer and he's all about the team." "He's intelligent but he's also incredibly curious," Wright said. "You don't see that a lot of times in somebody that's that highly touted. It's what makes him unique." — AFP

UEFA clears Milan, Villa and Brighton to play in Europe

LAUSANNE: UEFA on Friday authorized AC Milan, Aston Villa and Brighton to take part in European competitions next season after they made changes to avoid potential conflict with the multi-club ownership rule. Seven-time European champions Milan share the same US owners, Red-Bird Capital Partners, as French Cup winners Toulouse, while Villa's owners have a stake in Portuguese club Vitoria Guimaraes. Brighton owner Tony Guimaraes became the majority shareholder of Union Saint-Gilloise when he bought the Belgian side in 2018.

European football's governing body had appointed investigators to study the links between the teams in question, but said it was now satisfied "no one has control or decisive influence over more than one club" participating in its competitions. "Following the implementation of significant changes by the clubs and their related investors, the CFCB First Chamber accepted the admission of the aforementioned clubs to the UEFA club competitions

for the 2023/24 season," UEFA said in a statement. "The CFCB found that the significant changes implemented brought the clubs into compliance with the multi-club ownership rule."

It added: "These changes substantially restrict the investors' influence and decision-making power over more than one club, ensuring compliance with the multi-club ownership rule." UEFA has multi-club ownership regulations in place to protect the integrity of its competitions when such teams could be drawn to play each other. Rules do not allow a club to hold or deal in securities or shares of another club playing in a European competition and no club can be a member of any other club participating in UEFA competitions.

Additionally, no person has the power to be "simultaneously involved" in the management, administration or sporting performance of more than one club. As part of complying with the rules, none of the affected clubs will be able to transfer players to each other, whether permanently or on loan, until September 2024. Milan are due to play in the Champions League, with Brighton, Union and Toulouse in the Europa League. Villa and Vitoria are both in the qualifying rounds of the Conference League. — AFP