

Polestar 2  
Why wait  
to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



**3** Pakistani Embassy holds mango fest to mark 60 years of Pak-Kuwait ties



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**11** Mountaineer races rivals, hunts funds to chase summit record



## KD 6.8bn budget deficit seen

Barrak: Durra belongs to Kuwait, Saudi • Assembly to debate Audit Bureau chief resignation

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait budget for the 2023/2024 fiscal year is projecting a huge deficit of KD 6.8 billion as a result of a slide in the country's oil production and conservative prices of oil, the rapporteur of the National Assembly budgets committee said on Monday. MP Osama Al-Zaid said the committee began studying the draft budget as approved by the government, which projects revenues at KD 19.4 billion, around 18 percent lower than the previous year, and spending at KD 26.2 billion, 11.7 percent higher than the previous year.

He said that oil income is estimated at KD 17.2 billion, a 19.5 percent drop from the previous year as a result of cuts in production in line with OPEC+ decisions and also due to adopting a conservative

price of oil at \$70 a barrel. Zaid said non-oil revenues are estimated at KD 2.2 billion, 10 percent higher than the last fiscal year. The lawmaker said oil income still dominates revenues in the budget, which is not healthy and "we should look for other sources to boost non-oil income".

Zaid however insisted that the budget deficit is a projection and at the end of the year, "we could end up realizing a budget surplus" if oil prices and production rise. The lawmaker said wages and similar spending account for KD 14.7 billion, an increase of 14 percent, while subsidies account for KD 5.9 billion, of which KD 3.5 billion is for energy and fuel subsidies.

Zaid however stressed the financial situation of Kuwait is excellent because returns on huge foreign investments, estimated at more than \$700 billion, are

not included in the budget, and if they are included, the situation will be far better.

Meanwhile, Minister of Oil and Minister of State for Economic Affairs and Investment Saad Al-Barrak said Sunday the Durra offshore field solely belongs to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. In a televised interview with a Saudi news channel, Barrak added there is no room for negotiations with Iran before the demarcation of the marine borders according to international law. He affirmed the Iranian claims are not based on clearly demarcated marine borders.

The minister noted Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are "one team" when it comes to the Durra offshore field, and both countries have complete understanding and bilateral commitment based on the demarcation of borders and international laws. Barrak pointed out Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are ready to develop

the Durra field as soon as possible and begin various projects that were postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said at a press conference in Tehran on Monday that Iran is pursuing the issue related to the Durra field within the framework of bilateral talks with Kuwaiti officials.

In the meantime, the National Assembly is due to debate in its regular sessions on Tuesday and Wednesday the resignation of the president of the Audit Bureau Faisal Al-Shaya, among a host of issues including the Amiri address delivered at the inaugural session last month. Shaya submitted his resignation to Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun last week, saying he was forced to step down over political interference in the work of the bureau.

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### Last week the hottest worldwide on record: UN

**PARIS:** The beginning of July was the hottest week on record for the planet, according to early findings Monday from the World Meteorological Organization, after a series of scorching days saw global temperature records tumble. "The world just had the hottest week on record, according to preliminary data," the WMO said in a statement, after climate change and the early stages of the El Nino weather pattern drove the warmest June on record.

It's the latest in a series of records halfway through a year that has already seen a drought in Spain and fierce heat waves in China as well the United States. Temperatures are breaking records both on land and in the oceans, with "potentially devastating impacts on ecosystems and the environment", the WMO said. "We are in uncharted territory and we can expect more records to fall as El Nino develops further and these impacts will extend into 2024," said Christopher Hewitt, WMO Director of Climate Services. "This is worrying news for the planet."

The WMO said it had looked at various datasets from partners around the world. Europe's climate monitoring service Copernicus told AFP its data also showed last week was likely to be the hottest since records began in 1940. Copernicus said that its data suggests Thursday was likely to have seen the highest global average temperature, after several record-breaking days earlier in the week.

Last week, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said "the situation we are witnessing now is the demonstration that climate change is out of control". As well as withering crops, melting glaciers and raising the risk of wildfires, higher-than-normal temperatures also cause health problems ranging from heatstroke and dehydration to cardiovascular stress.

New research published Monday found that more than 61,000 people died due to the heat during Europe's record-breaking summer last year. The majority of deaths were of people over the age of 80 and around 63 percent of those who died due to the heat were women, according to the research published in the journal Nature Medicine. The difference became more stark over the age of 80, when women had a mortality rate 27 percent higher than men.

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### Gulf in line with UN on Russia-Ukraine conflict: GCC chief

**MOSCOW:** The position of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states on the Russia-Ukraine war is aligned with established UN conventions and principles, the bloc's chief Jassem Al-Budaiwi said on Monday. Gulf Arab states back the UN principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of states, in addition to all mediation efforts aiming to resolve the Russia-Ukraine war, he told strategic ministerial-level talks between the Riyadh-based bloc and Moscow.

Budaiwi spoke of the ripple effect the conflict has sparked across the entire world, particularly the steep rise in global food prices that will only gradually go down in the event a UN-brokered Black Sea

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MOSCOW: Russian and GCC foreign ministers and the GCC chief pose for a photo prior to their meeting on July 10, 2023. — AFP

### Biden takes tea and talks climate with King Charles

**LONDON:** US President Joe Biden dropped in for tea and climate change talks with King Charles III on Monday, after a garden meeting with UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak before a NATO leaders' summit on Ukraine. Biden, 80, flew in his Marine One helicopter from Downing Street in central London to Windsor Castle, touching down for a ceremonial welcome from a band of red-jacketed Welsh Guards.

"The Star Spangled Banner" and

"God Save the King" rang out across the manicured lawns of the stately royal residence west of London, before the pair inspected the troops and disappeared inside. The meeting, with warm handshakes and even a pat on Charles' back from Biden, is their first since the British monarch's coronation in May. In line with precedent, the US president did not attend the event but was represented by his wife, First Lady Jill Biden.

The couple had previously been at the state funeral of Charles' mother, Queen Elizabeth II, in September last year, while Biden visited the late queen at Windsor after the G7 summit in 2021. Charles, 74, is a lifelong environmentalist and Biden considers him

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WINDSOR: Britain's King Charles III and US President Joe Biden pose for photograph in the Grand Corridor at Windsor Castle on July 10, 2023. — AFP

### Threads signs up 100 million users in 5 days

**PARIS:** The Threads app launched by Instagram as a rival to Twitter has signed up more than 100 million users in less than five days, data tracking websites said on Monday, smashing the record of AI tool ChatGPT for fastest-growing consumer app. While ChatGPT took two months to hit the 100 million user mark and video-sharing app TikTok took nine months, Instagram itself took two and a half years to reach that mark after its 2010 launch.

Threads went live on Apple and Android app stores in 100 countries on Wednesday and Thursday, though it is not available in Europe because parent company Meta is unsure how to navigate the European Union's data privacy legislation. Twitter is

thought to have around 200 million regular users but it has suffered repeated technical failures since Tesla tycoon Elon Musk bought the platform last year and sacked thousands of staff.

Musk, also the boss of SpaceX, has alienated many users by introducing charges for previously free services and allowing banned rightwing accounts back on the platform. Several rivals have emerged but most are niche platforms without the capacity to grow at the necessary scale to dethrone Twitter. Threads is finding it easier because it is linked to Instagram, which has more than one billion regular users.

Online data service Quiver Quantitative reported that the app passed 100 million users at 0700 GMT on Monday. Other websites using a count of the "badges" received by Instagram users who have downloaded Threads reckoned the mark had passed earlier. But Europe's legislation around data privacy is giving Meta a severe headache. The firm already faces regular fines for breaching the EU's data privacy regime (GDPR).

Now the forthcoming Digital Markets Act explic-



itly bans firms like Meta — which also owns Facebook and WhatsApp — from combining data across its platforms. Its business model revolves around sucking up personal data to use for targeted ads and Threads accounts are linked to Instagram accounts. In his first public reaction to Threads, the EU's industry commissioner Thierry Breton told French radio

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## Crown Prince receives Speaker, Assembly Office members



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday received National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Sadoun. His Highness also received the National Assembly Office members for the 17th legislative term. — KUNA

# UN draft resolution confronts desecrating religious sanctities

## Kuwait stresses 'keeping Palestinian's human rights on UN agenda'

In my view

### Dangers of class discrimination



Dr Khalid Al-Saleh

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The entire world fights all forms of discrimination against others. All are against racism based on skin color, and many are the people who paid a high price due to religious and sectarian discrimination. Many wars took place, and millions of humans were killed due to populist and tribal discrimination. As people are always victims of inattentiveness, the most dangerous type of discrimination went past them and they did not notice it and did not fight it with the same power with which they fought others — it is class discrimination, which is different from other types of differentiation.

Stratification is a changeable social condition that made classes an accepted part of the formation of human societies. Heavenly and human legislations approved class distinctions and made it among the positive factors for the development of the human being and stimulate his abilities. Islam mentions class in the Holy Quran, as Almighty Allah says in Surah Al-Zukhruf: "Is it they who distribute your Lord's mercy? We "alone" distributed their "very" livelihood among them in this worldly life and raised some of them in rank above others so that some may employ others in service. "But" your Lord's mercy is far better than whatever "wealth" they amass. (43:32). This is what justice requires, and its foundation is in having matters in their place.

People are not equal in abilities and this calls for a difference in achievement. This requires acknowledgement of differences, so if class is a natural aspect of the human society, class discrimination, and the promotion of contempt culture among classes is a matter that confuses people because of their ignorance of the difference between class and class discrimination. Class discrimination is not confronted correctly, particularly in our Arab societies.

Many years ago, a Moroccan young girl took her own life after leaving a letter in which she complained against class contempt she faced in school. The e-magazine 'Psychology' published a scientific study, which is the first of its kind, that links physiological changes and class difference in youth. Dr Thomas Fuller Rowell from Wisconsin Maddison University said social-class discrimination contributes to poorer health. He said the study proved disorders, physiological conditions and decline in health in cases of lower classes.

So, class discrimination does not only have destructive psychological effects; rather it is different from other discriminations by being harmful to human health. So it is no wonder for diseases to spread among weaker classes in some of our Arab countries, who die younger, while previously we were blaming only poverty for being responsible for that, until we discovered that poverty has the smaller part while oppression has the larger part.

Today, we see in some of our Arab countries class discrimination that was not known in history. There are classes that do not see or come in touch with others. Even if they have to deal with lower classes, they create a psychological barrier that prevents them from communicating. There are Arab societies that are managed by classes that only see and hear themselves. We need to fight class discrimination, whose waves are getting wider, before a day comes when the poor disappear from the eyes of the rich, so they do not see them.

GENEVA: Kuwait participated in preparing the draft resolution, alongside the Group of Islamic Countries, to be presented before the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to confront religious hatred and desecrating religious sanctities. This came in a statement for KUNA, on Monday, by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hain, saying that this resolution aims to eliminate all types of religious hatred based on discrimination, hostility and violence.

He said that the project will be discussed before the UNHRC on Tuesday, and will reiterate the importance of implementing the universal declaration of human rights, the international covenant on civil and political rights, and the international convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination. He noted that there is a unanimous agreement between the Islamic Countries and common knowledge

of the dangers of desecration incidents. He added that exercising the right to freedom of expression carries special duties and responsibilities with it as stipulated in Articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva has stressed on the need to keep Palestinians' human rights on top of the UN council's agenda. "The Council must address Zionist continuous violations of international law, the latest of which the world witnessed in the city Jenin; a continuation of the crimes and state-sponsored terrorism perpetrated by the occupation against the Palestinian people," Ambassador Al-Hain, also Kuwait's permanent representative to other international organizations in Geneva, said in a speech before a UN Council.

He urged the Council to take serious actions and conduct independent and comprehensive investigations of Zionist international violations. It



Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Nasser Al-Hain

also called on the International Criminal Court to consider the deliberate denial of Palestinian's access to a fair trial and the widespread and institutionalized use of torture. — KUNA

## Social-scientific forum tackles drug abuse

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Arab Federation for Drug Abuse Prevention (AFDAP) Secretariat General participated in the first social-scientific forum on the occasion of the 'International Day Against Drug Abuse'. The event was held by the Adolescents Care Directorate under the patronage and presence of Social Affairs and Family and Childhood Affairs Minister Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah under the theme 'Towards a safe society, away from drugs'.

The forum attracted a wide range of participants from government and pri-

rate entities, as well as regional organizations that are active in the field of drug control in Kuwait. The Social Affairs Minister thanked all workers in the fields of prevention, treatment, and drug fighting for their efforts. AFDAP board member Dr Husna Majid Al-Shaheen thanked the participants and called for more cooperation with active entities in the field of drug control.

She said AFDAP is always ready to cooperate and participate with all government and private entities. This, she said, is among the goals of the federation and its strategy. Since the establishment of the Arab Federa-

tion in 1997, the secretariat general in Kuwait has been organizing regional conferences, workshops, and training programs in cooperation with several ministries, such as interior, education, social affairs, and Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, in addition to other private entities, as well as seeking the help of many experts, doctors, and psychologists. This is the best evidence of a successful partnership in the field of drug control.

AFDAP has members across Arab countries, with its secretariat in Kuwait. AFDAP has been organizing drug awareness programs at the regional level. There will be an awareness week in all member countries to shed light on the magnitude of the problem at the Arab level. Dr Al-Shaheen said AFDAP is working on holding a regional conference in Cairo at the end of the year



Dr Husna Majid Al-Shaheen

under the theme 'facing the changing reality of abusing and addicting to drugs.' Dr Al-Shaheen thanked the Social Affairs Ministry and the Minister, Sheikh Firas Saud Al-Malik Al-Sabah, for patronizing the forum.



KUWAIT: The Argentine Embassy held a reception on Sunday at Salwa Al-Sabah Hall and Theatre on the occasion of Argentina's Independence Day. The event attracted the presence of diplomats and other dignitaries. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



## Embassy marks Argentina Independence Day, envoy lauds Kuwait relations

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Argentine Embassy held a reception on Sunday at Salwa Al-Sabah Hall and Theatre on the occasion of Argentina's Independence Day. Ambassador of Argentina to Kuwait Claudia Alejandra Zampieri said Argentine-Kuwaiti relations began 50 years ago, pointing to the stages of their development throughout the long history of bilateral relations, adding "Kuwait and Argentina are close even though we are far geographically."

She praised the strength and durability of both countries' relations, which she described as devel-

oped in all fields and on various political, economic and cultural levels. Zampieri affirmed the relationship between the two countries is fruitful, where both share a lot of values in humanitarian work, adding that her country works to support, enhance and strengthen the relationship towards broader horizons that benefit the two friendly countries.

Regarding the visa process, the ambassador pointed out the Argentine Embassy provides facilities for Kuwaitis wishing to visit Argentina, and the issuance of a visa will take not more than a week depending on busy seasons, revealing the embassy issues around 10 visas a month. "Kuwaitis are showing interest in exploring Argentina. They are very adventurous, and Argentina has a lot to offer. We have waterfalls, mountains, coastlines and more," she pointed out.

Zampieri indicated Argentina has good cooperation with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. "They have granted around six



loans to Argentina for development and infrastructure, with a total amount of KD 15 million for each loan," she said. She revealed the two countries have signed around 20 agreements. "We had an agreement on diplomatic institutes to exchange students between Kuwait and Argentina, and we are looking forward to renewing it."



## Local

# Kuwait Municipality approves KD 55m Souq Mubarakiya development project

## Council passes amendments to waste management regulations



KUWAIT: The Municipal Council approved a number of proposals during its meeting on Monday. — KUNA photos



This photo shows a 3D visualization of what an area of Souq Mubarakiya could look like after development.

**KUWAIT:** Municipal Council approved on Monday a plan to develop Souq Al-Mubarakiya, the adjacent parking spaces, nearby commercial areas and municipal park.

"The main idea behind developing the area is the optimal use of all parts of Mubarakiya and the municipal park. As things stand now, there are many parts that do not have visitors. High turnout is currently only near the Mubarak kiosk and 'Barahat Al-bahar'," he added.

The Council, chaired by Abdullah Al-Mehri, also approved a proposal to amend the hygiene and waste transport regulations, which include more than 30 items.

Committee Member Sharifa Al-Shalfan said last week that 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.

The council approved the consultative agreement on the study, design and preparation of contractual documents and supervision of implementation and maintenance of rainwater drainage in the northern, southern and western urban areas in Kuwait.

It also approved the finance Ministry request to move the allocated site for Kuwait Municipality in Fintas, described as Fintas entertainment center in Eqaila area, block 5, in favor of Finance Ministry for material payment for social securities default.

### KD 55 million project

Director of the Mubarakiya project Hassan Al-Kandari said the Mubarakiya development project will cost KD 55 million for a total built area of about 131,000 square meters, including 21,000 for commercial spaces.

Kandari added that the project will be fully developed by the private sector through tenders.

"Mubarakiya area is one of the most important heritage and commercial areas in the State of Kuwait and at the Gulf level," he said.

He stressed the keenness of the Kuwait Municipality, which is the authority entrusted with the markets and its establishment, to follow-up, develop and supervise the markets so that this development is carried out by experienced engineering offices.

The Mubarakiya area development project, said Kandari, will address the issues devaluating the area and undermining its economic worth. Social, environmental and economic factors, as well as the modern design of the area, are the main criteria taken into consideration in the development project.

The municipality will be reviewing the studies that have been previously done on the area, starting with aerial photographs and structural plans of the State of Kuwait, one of which was done in 1969 by the Italian Chancellor Brico Belgiososo.

"The Mubarakiya area is currently based on several sites, namely the streets of money changers, banks, old and popular markets,



A photo shows a visualization of the proposed development of Souq Mubarakiya and surrounding areas.

meat and vegetable markets," he said.

The new development will have cars enter the area only through tunnels. "Visitors to the Mubarakiya area will enter and exit through the main entrances near the municipal park, Barahat Al-bahar parking, Gulf Bank parking, or the entrance opposite the Qibla School. Through those basements, they will head to the parking lots near the

place where the visitor intends to visit," he added.

"Sites that are not currently utilized will be used to complement the modern elements in the area, including (building) a boutique hotel, a mosque and museum named after Imam Abdulrahman Al-Faisal, the founder of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in addition to a number of commercial buildings," he added. — KUNA

## Strategic alternative 'unfair': Parliamentary finance committee

**KUWAIT:** The financial and economic parliamentary committee has announced that the current study of the "strategic alternative" to fix salaries of Kuwaiti employees, is "unfair" as it does not count employees of the private sector, stressing that the committee "does not believe that the alternative strategic is going to be implemented any time soon."

The strategic alternative, which is a government project to overhaul the public sector's payroll system, was at the center of controversy last week as rumors of the project seeing the light circulated on social media.

Finance Minister Manaf Al-Hajri had earlier refuted the rumors, saying that the project is still under deliberation.

"The draft law has been on the National Assembly's agenda for eight years, but the study has not been completed," said repertoire of the committee, Abdulwahab Al-Eisa.

He added that if passed, the "strategic alternative" will cause a large number of private sector employees to change their jobs to work in ministerial jobs, which will put extra burden on the state's budget.

Meanwhile, the committee has denied the approval of the national debt in order to pay salaries, stressing that "this will always be the position unless the national debt is used to make more revenue."

In other news, the National Assembly office decided in its meeting on Sunday to approve the formation of a defense team before the Constitutional Court on electoral appeals. The team will be headed by the Chairman of the Parliamentary Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee MP Muhammad Al-Sayer.

This came in a statement after the office held its second meeting under the chairmanship of National Assembly Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun and the presence of members of the parliament's office and the Secretary-General of the National Assembly Khaled Bu Sulayb.

The Assembly's office, also agreed to start arranging procedures related to filling the available positions in the General Secretariat with experienced employees and fresh graduates through a declaration committed to transparency and linked to the technical, administrative and legal needs of the General Secretariat of the National Assembly as soon as possible.

The office also approved MP Hamad Al-Olayan's proposal to use the products of the Old Kuwaiti Crafts Society to provide souvenirs to visiting parliamentary delegations. The Bureau decided to agree to accept grievances submitted by some Secretariat staff who were retired in the period following the abolition of the 2022 assembly. — Agencies



KUWAIT: Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah tours the booths at the Mango Festival held to mark 60 years of Kuwaiti-Pakistani diplomatic relations.



(From left) WHO Representative in Kuwait Dr Assad Hafeez, Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Ameerah Al-Hassan, and British Ambassador Belinda Lewis are seen at the event.



People examine one of the types of mangoes on display at the festival. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayat

## Mango festival marks 60 years of Kuwait-Pakistan ties

By Ghadeer Ghloom

**KUWAIT:** The Pakistani Embassy in Kuwait held a mango festival in Souq Mubarakiya on Sunday to celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Kuwait. The festival was held in the presence of Sheikha Amthal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Pakistani Ambassador Malik Muhammad Farooq, British Ambassador Belinda Lewis, Head of UN Habitat in Kuwait Dr Ameerah Al-Hassan, WHO Representative in Kuwait Dr Assad Hafeez and other diplomats and attendees.

Farooq expressed to Kuwait Times his gratitude for earning the opportunity to come and serve as

an ambassador of his country to Kuwait. He said his job and role is to bring the two nations together. Therefore, different events are planned to celebrate Pakistan and Kuwait's 60th anniversary, and one of these events is the Mango Festival, which introduces over 500 different varieties of Pakistani mangoes. Farooq said the mango season starts in April and continues until the end of May or mid-June, when mangoes reach their peak.

"Mangoes are now at the end of the season, with 37 varieties on display at this event. The best mango is what we call 'Chaunsa'. We brought the Chaunsa mango to let our Kuwaiti friends taste it, because



Pakistani Ambassador Malik Muhammad Farooq speaks at the celebration.

this mango is different in two ways — the first is the aroma, and then of course the taste. It is sweet to the extent that you feel it might not be natural sweetness. We call it the king of mangoes, and it only comes for a very short period of time," the ambassador said.

Farooq thanked his Kuwaiti friends and the Pakistani community who are very active in this festival, especially UN Habitat, Kuwait Volunteering



A booth displays different types of Pakistani Mangoes.

Center and other collaborators who made this event happen. "My main purpose is to bring the countries together and to increase trade between them," he concluded.

## Govt to fund 565 students to study medicine abroad

**KUWAIT:** The Ministry of Higher Education announced that 710 students will get government-funded scholarships to study medical specialties, including medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, abroad.

Minister of Education, Dr Hamad Al-Adwani, approved on Sunday the names of 3,454 students accepted in the foreign scholarship plan for the year 2023-2024 who graduated from public, private and foreign high schools in 2021/2022 and 2022/2023.

Lanyaa Al-Melhem, acting undersecretary of the higher education ministry, said in a statement

that more students were accepted in specializations needed in Kuwait's labor market compared to last year, she added.

The number of students who will receive a scholarship for a medical specialty is 710 students, including 565 in human medicine. Public school students had a slightly larger share, nabbing 51 percent of the seats. Their counterparts in private schools got 49 percent of the seats.

There were also 745 students accepted in engineering specialties and 797 students in auxiliary medicine specialties.

The plan put forward by the Ministry of Higher Education includes several specialties in several new countries, including immunology and pathology in Australia.

"Specialties that have been included in new countries such as aviation management and meteorology in Canada, dentistry, aeronautical engineering, occupational therapy, oral health in Australia,

medical laboratory science in the United States of America, speech therapy in New Zealand, radiography in the United Kingdom and human medicine at the Royal College of Surgeons RCSI in the Kingdom of Bahrain," she clarified.

Seats allocated for medical specialties, such as dentistry and medicine, have jumped by 54 percent in this year's plan. The support for these specialties comes from the ministry's keenness to provide the health system with high-quality and efficient expertise.

Melhem called on students to abide by the immigration laws in the countries where they will be studying and adhere to the regulations of the scholarships set by the Ministry of Higher Education.

She urged students and their parents to follow the ministry's account through official social media on Twitter and Instagram to stay updated on the procedures and requirements for enrollment. — Agencies



## News in Brief

Four people injured  
in gas leak explosion

KUWAIT: A gas leak led to an explosion in an apartment building in Farwaniya on Monday, leaving four people injured, the Department of Public Relations and media of the Kuwait Fire Force announced. The Central Operations Department received a report of the incident on Monday at dawn. The explosion, which happened in an apartment on the ground floor, led to the collapse of the kitchen and the room next to it, said the fire force in a statement. Firefighting teams from the Farwaniya and Sabhan fire stations were sent to the site of the fire. The building was immediately evacuated as firefighters handled the situation.

Residency affairs employee to  
go to prison in bribery case

KUWAIT: The appeals court upheld a four-year prison sentence for a female employee in a bribery case. The employee, a citizen working in residency affairs, asked for a bribe of KD 500 from a Pakistani expatriate to complete an entry visa transaction.

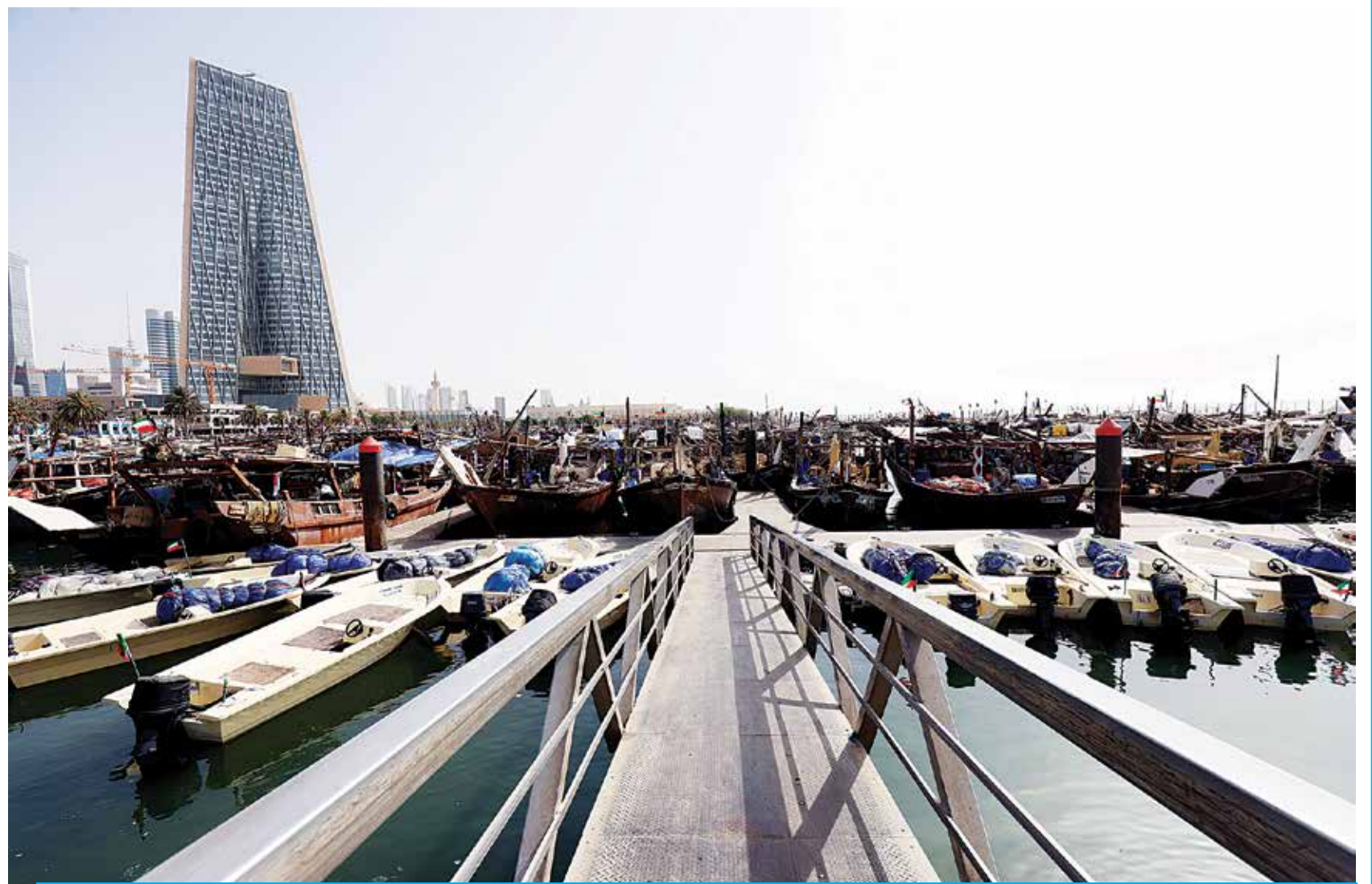
Construction worker dies  
while on duty in Mutlaa

KUWAIT: An Egyptian construction worker has passed away after falling from the roof of a building under construction in Mutlaa while he was on duty. The worker was pronounced dead at the scene and a report of the incident was filed with authorities.

600 cadets enroll in Saad  
Al-Abdullah Police Academy

KUWAIT: Saad Al-Abdullah Police Academy announced the enrolment of 600 cadets and 100 reservists out of 5,590 candidates for the 48th batch of high school graduates. The names of those enrolled were drawn from a lottery of qualified candidates under the auspices of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in the presence of Undersecretary Lt Gen Anwar Abdullatif Al-Barjas and Assistant Undersecretary Maj Gen Bader Al-Baloul. Several senior police officers attended the draw, according to a statement by the ministry. — KUNA

## Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Boats are docked at the Souq Sharq harbor in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Never give up; be a good listener: Kuwaiti authors share advice

## Publishing process in Kuwait 'unimaginably easy', says one author

By Munirah Al-Fayez

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times interviewed three Kuwaiti authors — Haider Al-Mosawi, Hanan Al-Obaid and Yasmeen Al-Hasan — to ask them about their experience of writing and publishing a book in Kuwait. A Kuwaiti author who has published multiple books online, Mosawi said he believes that learning English as a second language made him interested in languages, which led to him becoming a writer. "I became a writer because I feel I have a lot to say and I can contribute to the lives of others by sharing ideas they will find beneficial in their lives. I cannot not write at this point," he said.

According to Mosawi, writing is easy; however, the struggle is in deciding what to write about. He explained how in the future he would like to involve his audience in choosing a topic for him to write about, so he would get feedback early on. He said involving others helps writers stay committed and helps them base their decisions on actual feedback rather than assumptions. He also advised people who would like to become writers.

"Don't think of it as a book. Think of it as a collection of essays. If you feel intimidated by the prospect of writing a book, it's much easier to think of your book as shorter essays you're putting together."

Obaid, who has published multiple Arabic fiction books, said she has loved writing since she was younger. According to Obaid, the writing and publishing process in Kuwait is "unimaginably easy", especially since Kuwait gives writers freedom of speech, which is not always the case in other countries. However, advertising her first book was not easy, because "people have not heard your name before or read anything you have written, and because there are many competitors". She said in the future, she would want to give herself the time to learn self-marketing so it becomes easier.

Obaid's advice to people who are going through the same thing she went through is that "the process is long and tiring, but you should not give up. Keep going and have patience, even if it takes a long time. The most important thing is that you will end up with a result that will satisfy you and your target audience. Also, become a good listener."

Hasan, a writer who has published two books of stories and poems, explained the reason she started writing. "I found my voice in writing. I found that I express myself and my feelings a lot better in prose. I found I can share so much emotion through stories and poems. So, it became a passion."

Hasan said her first book took a few years to finish, as she took her time, because she did not have a deadline for herself. However, when it came to her second



book, she said she challenged herself to finish it in a few months. Hasan has only worked with one publisher, and was responsible for writing, designing and editing. So when it came to publishing, they approved her work, signed the contract and started printing her book, which took a few months. She said the publisher she worked with took the responsibility of publishing her book, which facilitated the process for her, adding most of her books were sold was during the book fair.

Hasan advises people who are considering writing a book to "go for it". "Don't be afraid to take the first step, even if there are mistakes or God forbid the book doesn't succeed. It doesn't mean you should quit; on the contrary, it should motivate you and it'll always be an experience," she said.



KUWAIT: Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah (center left), President of Mabarrat Al-Saad, is seen with representatives from one of the winning schools. — KUNA

## Mabarrat Al-Saad honors women's role in development

KUWAIT: Mabarrat Al-Saad for Knowledge and Scientific Research announced the names of the winners of the awards of the Middle East Network for Women Inventors and Innovators (Ibtikar) and the Sheikha Fadia Al-Saad Scientific Competition at the level of the Arab world.

In the "Ibtikar" competition, Mabarrat Al-Saad announced that Maryam Al-Ghafri from the United Arab Emirates won gold, Dr Tahira Jafari won silver, Both Wafa Al-Obaidat from the Kingdom of Bahrain and Noha Al-Maya from Kuwait won bronze.

Mabarrat Al-Saad also announced that Qatar Technical School for Girls from the State of Qatar won first place in the Fadia Al-Saad Scientific Competition for secondary schools, Fatima Bint Asad School for Basic Education from the Sultanate of Oman won second place, while Al-Fawwar Secondary School for Girls from the State of Palestine won third place.

As for intermediate schools, Al-Hijra School from the United Arab Emirates won first place, Ibra School for Basic Education from the Sultanate of Oman won second place repeated, the third intermediate school in Saudi Arabia won second place repeated, and Zainab

Preparatory School from Bahrain won third place.

In her speech during the ceremony announcing the winners, Sheikha Fadia Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, President of Mabarrat Al-Saad praised the cooperation with the Middle East Network for Women Inventors and Innovators launched by Mabarrat Al-Saad and the Global Network of Inventors and Innovators in celebrating women making a difference and contributing to promoting development.

"The development that our countries have witnessed in recent years is evident through the active presence of women in all productive sectors, as no country, economy or society can rise to the challenges of the times or invest all the energies it abounds in isolation from the role of women, which is at the heart of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and at the forefront of its 71 related goals," she said.

She stressed the essential role of education and training in developing entrepreneurship and mobilizing women's abilities to engage in creativity, noting that "it is necessary to include this in the process of indoctrination and knowledge acquisition," and that "the competitions we celebrate today are only part of an integrated building that we seek to achieve."

Executive Director of Al-Saad Foundation for Knowledge and Scientific Research, Dr Aisha Al-Houli, said the competition will witness the include entries from Turkey and Indonesia next season, considering it "a good indicator ... which confirms the increased awareness of the importance of this type of competition that refines talents and achieves achievements at a high level of creativity and innovation." — KUNA



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Spain sweats as temperatures soar in summer heatwave

## Spain coastguard says 200 migrants missing in Atlantic

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THE HAGUE: Outgoing Prime Minister Mark Rutte arrives for a debate on the fall of the cabinet at the House of Representatives in The Hague, on July 10, 2023. — AFP

# Veteran Dutch PM Rutte quits politics

## European Union's second longest-serving leader after Hungary's Viktor Orban

**THE HAGUE:** Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said Monday he was leaving politics after nearly 13 years in charge, in a shock end to his time as the longest-serving leader in the history of the Netherlands.

Nicknamed "Teflon Mark" for surviving scandals that hit his four governments, the centre-right leader said he would bow out after elections triggered by the collapse of his coalition in a row over asylum policy.

The European Union's second longest-serving leader after Hungary's Viktor Orban was widely expected to seek a fifth term in the elections this autumn, but stunned MPs with his surprise announcement. "I feel ok, but of course it is a significant moment for me personally," Rutte, 56, told AFP after leaving parliament.

The bike-riding, frugal-living premier had steered the Netherlands through economic upheaval and the COVID pandemic since 2010, relying on a "Mr Normal" image to appeal to voters.

He was also a European stalwart, who infuriated some southern countries with his hard line on bailouts but won support for his backing of Ukraine.

### 'Pass the baton'

The four-party coalition government collapsed on Friday over Rutte's plans to cut numbers of family members from war zones who are allowed to reunite with asylum-seekers in the Netherlands.

The ChristenUnie—a Christian Democratic party—and the centre-left Democracy 66 had strongly opposed Rutte's plan. Rutte, who passed Ruud Lubbers last August to become the longest-serving Dutch PM, is staying on as caretaker premier until a new government is formed. He is due to mark 13 years in office in October. "I would like to say something personal. There has been speculation over the past few days about what motivates me. The only answer is the Netherlands," Rutte said during a parliamentary debate on the fall of the coalition.

"Yesterday morning, I took the decision that I am no longer suitable to be the new leader of the VVD (his party). When the new government is sworn in after the elections, I will quit politics."

Rutte later told reporters: "This is not entirely

without emotion... But it feels good to pass the baton." Politicians from all sides paid tribute but were already eyeing the post-Rutte era, with a protest party of Dutch farmers in particular hoping to repeat their recent success in senate elections.

The farmers have held months of rowdy rallies against plans to cut livestock numbers and maybe close some farms to meet environmental targets.

### 'Very surprised'

The Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB)'s leader Caroline van der Plas told AFP she was "very surprised" by Rutte's decision but that it was "very wise". She said she was "not sure yet" if she wanted to serve as prime minister but the "good news for the Netherlands is that a new policy will be made".

Dutch lawmakers applauded after far-right leader Geert Wilders, Rutte's long-term rival, praised him in parliament, saying: "Your choices were not ours, but you made them with conviction." Opposition parties scrapped a planned no-confidence motion

that would have toppled Rutte as caretaker premier. Foreign Minister Wopke Hoekstra, who said he was also stepping down as head of the CDA, one of the parties in the fallen coalition, said he had an "incredible amount of respect" for Rutte.

He later tweeted a meme involving the comic character Tintin, saying "What a week huh" with the reply "it's only Monday morning." There are no obvious successors in Rutte's own party, which announced it would choose a candidate this week ahead of the elections, which are likely to be in mid-November.

Turkish-born Justice Minister Dilan Yesilgoz and VVD parliamentary group leader Sophie Hermans, a former assistant to Rutte, are among the frontrunners, broadcaster RTL said. Rutte meanwhile has been tipped for the top jobs at NATO or the European Council. But he indicated he would continue his work as a part-time teacher instead. "Maybe I'll do that for a few days," he told reporters. — AFP

## Heavy rains and flooding pummel US northeast

**NEW YORK:** The northeastern United States was inundated Monday with heavy rain and flooding across several states a day after storms and flash floods washed out highways and killed one person in New York state.

Parts of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Vermont were under flood warnings as of 6:00 am (1000 GMT) Monday, with states in the region recording rapid rainfall and "life threatening" flash floods, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).

Heavy rains in New York state on Sunday turned streets into raging waterways, washing out bridges, leaving roads impassable and leading Governor Kathy Hochul to declare states of emergency in two counties.

The Orange County Emergency Management office on Monday confirmed one fatality in Highland Falls, in New York's Hudson Valley, where "historic floods" caused significant damage. Local media said a woman was swept to her death in a flash flood in the valley as she tried to evacuate her damaged house with her dog. Hochul said Sunday that up to eight inches (200 mm) of rain had created "life threatening conditions due to flash flooding." On Sunday evening, more than 12,000 customers had lost electricity in the state, but by early Monday that figure had dropped to 6,000.

Amtrak rail service was suspended between New York City and state capital Albany "due to severe weather conditions" as of 5:30 am, the company said in a statement. New York State Police said on Twitter Monday that the southbound Taconic State Parkway in Dutchess County was "closed between State Route 82 and Beekman Road due to flooding. Unknown ETA for reopening."

In Vermont, law enforcement reported severe rain in four counties, with several roads washed out and closed, it said. "The expected rainfall rate is 0.25 to 0.5 inches in 1 hour," NWS said in a state alert. "Flash flooding is already occurring" and "catastrophic flooding" was expected Monday in parts of the Vermont. — AFP

## NATO leaders gather in bid to bolster support for Ukraine

**VILNIUS:** Western leaders gather in Lithuania's capital on Monday to demonstrate solidarity with Ukraine amid rare glimmers of disunity over Washington's controversial decision to supply cluster bombs to Kyiv.

President Volodymyr Zelensky voiced hope that Tuesday's NATO summit in Vilnius would provide a "clear signal" that Kyiv could join the alliance once its war with Russia is over. Keen to expose any hint of friction among the allies, the Kremlin fired an eve-of-summit warning that Ukraine's membership of the military alliance would have "very, very negative consequences for the entire security architecture in Europe." On the battlefield, Ukraine's counteroffensive ground on, its forces recapturing 14 square kilometres in the past week amid "heavy fighting" near the Russian-controlled city of Bakhmut, the military said. And Russian shelling Sunday of a humanitarian aid hub in the frontline Zaporizhzhia region killed four people, the local governor announced Monday.

### Cluster concerns

Ahead of the summit, US President Joe Biden met with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak during a stopover in London on Monday, with British concern over the cluster munitions deal a key subject for discussion. Britain is one of more than 120 countries that have signed an agreement banning the production, storage, sale and use of cluster bombs, which rights groups say pose a danger to civilian populations long after they are deployed.

Biden said the decision to send the weapons was "very difficult" but Ukrainian forces were "running out of ammunition". White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan on Sunday played down any rift between the two leaders and in NATO, saying the Biden and Sunak were "on the same page strategically on Ukraine".

China on Monday denounced the move as "irresponsible" and said it could lead to "humanitarian problems". "We should fairly manage humanitarian concerns and legitimate military and security needs, and maintain a prudent and restrained attitude towards the transfer of cluster munitions," Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said.



VILNIUS: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg (L) and Lithuanian President Gitanas Nausėda address a joint press conference ahead of a NATO Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, on July 10, 2023. — AFP

In a summit expected to present unity on Ukraine's future membership, a key goal is to pressure Turkey to drop its opposition to Sweden's all-but-cleared membership bid. Sweden's prime minister will meet Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday afternoon in a last-gasp effort to bridge the diplomatic impasse. Erdogan has voiced repeated frustrations with what he calls Sweden's failure to keep its promises to deal with suspected Kurdish militants allegedly "roaming the streets" of Stockholm. He told Biden on a call Sunday that though Sweden had taken "some steps in the right direction" over Turkey's concerns, it had "nullified those steps" by allowing pro-Kurdish groups to hold demonstrations "freely praising terrorism", Erdogan's office said.

### Erdogan plays EU membership card

And the Turkish dramatically upped the ante just hours before his meeting with Sweden's Ulf Kristersson, saying he would relen on Stockholm's candidacy if the European Union re-opened long-stalled membership talks with Ankara.

"First, open the way to Turkey's membership of the European Union, and then we will open it for Sweden, just as we had opened it for Finland," Erdogan told Turkish television before leaving for Vilnius.

Turkey formally launched membership negotiations with the bloc in 2005, but the talks stalled in

2016 over European concerns about Turkish human rights. "Almost all the NATO members are EU members. I now am addressing these countries, which are making Turkey wait for more than 50 years, and I will address them again in Vilnius."

Turkey and Hungary remain the only NATO members still standing in the way of the unanimous ratification needed for Sweden to become the bloc's 32nd member. Hungary has strongly signalled it will follow Erdogan's lead and approve Sweden's membership should Ankara give it the green light.

### Russian shelling hits aid hub

On the ground, an aid hub in the town of Orikhiv in southern Ukraine was hit by Russian shelling, which killed three women and a man, regional governor Yuriy Malashko said on social media. "They hit a humanitarian aid delivery spot in a residential area... Four people died on the spot: women aged 43, 45 and 47 and a 47-year-old man," Malashko said, calling the attack "a war crime".

Ukraine's prosecutor general said in a statement the strike had occurred one day earlier, at 1:20 pm local time (1020 GMT) and that 13 people were injured, in addition to those killed. It released images showing a red-brick two-storey building partially collapsed and surrounded by debris and snapped roof beams. — AFP



## International

# Uzbekistan president Mirziyoyev cements power with election win

## Election lacked genuine political competition despite some efforts to reform

**TASHKENT:** Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev won a third term that will keep him in charge of the gas-rich country until 2030 as international observers said Monday the vote had lacked "genuine" competition.

Mirziyoyev, who was running against three largely unknown candidates, won Sunday's election with 87 percent of the vote, according to preliminary results. The 65-year-old has promised to open up Uzbekistan to foreign investment and tourism and implement major reforms in Central Asia's most populous country.

"Uzbekistan's presidential election lacked genuine political competition despite some efforts to reform," an election monitoring mission from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), said in a statement.

They also said that a number of recommendations key to the democratic process "remain unaddressed." Urszula Gacek, the head of the mission, said her organisation urged the country to "take bolder measures towards a true democracy that includes all citizens".

A former Soviet republic, Uzbekistan is wedged between Russia and China and shares a border with Afghanistan. Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated Mirziyoyev on a "convincing electoral victory."

The win "confirms your high political authority and points to the broad, popular support for your policy of large-scale reforms," he wrote. The two also spoke on the phone and discussed their "strategic partnership". Chinese leader Xi Jinping also congratulated Mirziyoyev in a phone call.

### 'Lack of opposition'

"Xi Jinping pointed out, in recent years, under our joint leadership, China-Uzbekistan relations have achieved breakthrough development, and cooperation in various fields has been comprehensively strengthened," state broadcaster CCTV said.

Xi told Mirziyoyev he "very much cherishes the good working relationship and personal friendship with you", CCTV added. In May, Xi hosted Mirziyoyev and other Central Asian leaders for a summit in the northern Chinese city of Xi'an.

Mirziyoyev previously served as prime minister under his hardline predecessor Islam Karimov before winning his first term in 2016 and getting re-elected in 2021. A constitutional referendum this year paved the way for him to serve two more presidential terms and increased the mandate from five years to seven, meaning he could stay in power until 2037.

Mirziyoyev, who trained as an engineer, portrays himself as a reformer creating a "New Uzbekistan" and has said he wants to double gross domestic product to \$160 billion (146 billion euros) soon. He focused his re-election campaign on the economy and education.

He has ended the practice of forced labour in Uzbekistan's cotton fields and released political prisoners jailed during Karimov's quarter-century rule. NGOs say human rights are better than under Karimov but there is still much to improve, and the authorities have shown no sign of allowing a real opposition to emerge. — AFP



**TASHKENT:** Members of a local electoral commission count ballots at a polling station after Uzbekistan's presidential election in Tashkent. — AFP

## Zionist entity parliament to vote on judicial overhaul

**JERUSALEM:** Zionist entity's parliament is to vote on a bill that would limit court powers, in a new political offensive to push on with a judicial overhaul that has split the nation. The changes, proposed by the hard-right government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have sparked one of the country's biggest ever protest movements since their announcement in January.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets in weekly rallies, demanding a halt to the planned overhaul of Zionist entity's justice system. Following stiff opposition and growing international criticism -- including from US President Joe Biden -- Netanyahu ordered a "pause" in March to allow for talks on the proposals. But with Zionist entity's

two main opposition leaders, Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz, pulling out of negotiations, Netanyahu has now made a fresh bid to pass the legislation in parliament. Later on Monday, parliament will see the first reading of a bill aimed at excluding the judiciary's right to rule on the "reasonableness" of government decisions. One of its potential effects would be on the appointment of ministers.

Netanyahu in January was forced to dismiss cabinet member Aryeh Deri, of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish party Shas, after intervention by the Supreme Court over a previous tax evasion conviction. The proposals would also give the government a greater say in the appointment of judges.

The administration of Netanyahu, who returned to power in December at the head of a coalition with ultra-Orthodox Jewish and extreme-right allies, argues that the revamp is necessary to ensure a better balance of power. But critics have accused Netanyahu, who is on trial over corruption charges, of trying to use the overhaul to quash possible judgements against him. Netanyahu denies the charges and rejects any

haven't found it," a spokeswoman told AFP. Helena Maleno, head of Spanish NGO Caminando Fronteras that helps boats in distress, confirmed that a boat had left the southern town of Kafountine on 27 June with approximately 200 people on board.

"The families told us about the disappearance of the boat saying they had had no news for several days," she said in an audio message, indicating the NGO had alerted the Spanish and Moroccan authorities.

The Atlantic route is extremely perilous because of its strong currents, with migrants often setting sail in overcrowded boats which are unseaworthy. Migrant crossings to the Atlantic archipelago began surging in late 2019 after increased patrols along Europe's southern coast dramatically reduced Mediterranean crossings. — AFP

## Spain coastguard says 200 migrants missing in Atlantic

**MADRID:** Spain's coastguard said Monday it had deployed a plane to search for 200 migrants aboard a boat missing in the Atlantic after setting off from the coast of Senegal. In a message on Twitter, Salvamento Maritimo said the rescue plane, which is based in the Canary Islands, was looking for a boat "that left Senegal with around 200 people on board".

"With the plane, we have been searching a very wide area south of Gran Canaria and Tenerife but we

link between the judicial changes and his own case.

Opponents more generally regard the proposals as a threat to Zionist entity's democracy. Demonstrators have vowed to press on and have called for mass protests on Tuesday if the vote on the first reading of the bill passes. A poll released Sunday by Zionist entity's public Kan television channel showed 31 percent of Zionists were in favour of the changes, while 43 percent opposed them.

In a June interview with the Wall Street Journal, Netanyahu revealed that he would continue with the reforms but without a clause that curbs the Supreme Court's powers. "I already changed a few things right after the original proposal was put forward," Netanyahu said in the interview. "I said that the idea of an override clause where the parliament, the Knesset, can override the decisions of the Supreme Court with a simple majority, I said, I threw that out." — AFP

Meanwhile, Zionist entity forces on Monday shot a gunman who the army said fired on soldiers in the occupied West Bank, with the Palestinian health ministry reporting the alleged assailant was killed.

The gunman got out of his vehicle then "hurled a grenade, and fired shots at the soldiers" near Deir Nidham village, northwest of Ramallah, the Zionist entity's military said.

"The soldiers responded with live fire and neutralised the assailant," the statement added. The Palestinian health ministry announced the death of Bilal Qadah, 33, "near the village of Deir Nidham", without giving further details.

The incident adds to a surge in violence in the West Bank, which has been occupied by Zionist forces since the 1967 Six-Day War. Eighteen Palestinians, including militants and children, and two Zionist soldiers have been killed in the territory since July 3, the majority in a two-day Zionist entity's raid on the northern city of Jenin, the largest operation of its kind in years. The United Nations secretary-general, Antonio Guterres, said last week that Zionist entity used "excessive force" as troops, backed by drone strikes and armoured bulldozers, targeted Palestinian militants in the densely-populated Jenin refugee camp. — AFP

## Curfew in central Nigeria state after new attacks

**JOS:** Nigeria has imposed a 24-hour curfew in a north-central region after more tit-for-tat attacks killed at least another nine people. The move, introduced Sunday in Mangu district in Plateau State, followed two months of clashes between nomadic herders and pastoral farmers that community leaders say have left more than 200 dead.

Intercommunal violence often flares in Plateau, which straddles the dividing line between Nigeria's

mostly Muslim north and predominantly Christian south. Plateau Governor Caleb Mutfwang imposed the 24-hour ban on movement after more attacks in Mangu over the weekend.

"Movements within the Local Government (area) have been banned until further notice except for security personnel and persons on essential duties," his spokesman Gyang Bere said in a statement. In the latest unrest, gunmen raided villages in the Sabon Gari area of Mangu Sunday, killing at least nine people in a "reprisal" attack, regional military spokesman Major James Oya told AFP.

Confirming the attack, a community leader, Jerry Datim, said gunmen attacked his village, Sabon Gari in Mangu, burning houses and destroying many other properties. "So far, we have recovered nine dead bodies; we are still searching because some people are still missing," he said. — AFP

## KD 6.8bn budget deficit seen...

**Continued from Page 1**

Eight non-governmental societies on Monday criticized the way Shaya was forced to resign and expressed in a statement fears that relations between the Assembly and the Audit Bureau will be governed by changing political events, when the bureau is supposed to be a neutral body. The organizations said the main issue here remains ensuring the independence of the Audit Bureau to be able to carry out its job of monitoring the finances of the state.

But MP Hamad Al-Mudlej insisted on Monday the reasons stated by Shaya as the cause of his resigna-

tion "were untrue", claiming Shaya and his deputy have hidden important information from the Assembly, which is considered a crime. He said Shaya and his deputy have hidden information about dealings with a Zionist company by a state-owned enterprise, adding the monitoring team has proved that it was Shaya who forced senior bureau employees to conceal information.

Also, five MPs on Monday submitted a draft law calling on the government to grant Kuwaiti citizenship to up to 4,000 stateless people, locally known as bedoons. MPs have in the past submitted such a bill several times, but it was never implemented. The lawmakers said the priority should be given to bedoons who are children of Kuwaiti women, in addition to bedoons who fought in Arab wars under the Kuwaiti army.

is also locked in a personal and increasingly juvenile rivalry with Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg. The two men have been bickering for years, but things have become heated since it became clear Meta intended to compete with Twitter.

Last month, the two men called each other out for a cage fight, and when launching Threads, Zuckerberg tweeted for the first time in a decade. He posted a popular meme of two Spider-Men looking at each other, taken as a reference to the similarity between Threads and Twitter. On Monday, Musk took his beef with Zuckerberg to a new level, proposing that the two men engage in a new contest. — AFP

Additional investment, including from the private sector, is required to cut non-CO2 emissions, halt deforestation as well as to adapt and build resilience to climate change. Biden, who arrived in the UK on Air Force One late Sunday, is heading to the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius. He left for the two-day NATO meeting after just under two hours at Windsor. From there, he heads to Finland, NATO's newest member, for a US-Nordic Leaders' Summit.

Biden's whistlestop visit to the UK came with Ukraine pushing to join NATO once its war with Russia is over. Western allies agree that Ukraine cannot become a member while war is still raging, as it would pull the alliance into direct conflict with nuclear-armed Russia. But the United States is seen as most hesitant about its membership. Biden has described Kyiv's bid as "premature". "I don't think it's ready for membership in NATO," he told broadcaster CNN. — AFP

## Gulf in line with UN on Russia-Ukraine...

**Continued from Page 1**

grain export deal is extended, he underlined. The talks come at a time where the world is dealing with mounting challenges, chief among them food security, while the bloc supports "dialogue and diplomacy" as viable solutions to global conflicts, he added.

On ties with Moscow, the GCC secretary general cited progress in relations as evidenced by holding these "strategic" talks, while the fields of energy, trade and investment have seen a growing level of cooperation, he said.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described relations between Russia and the GCC countries as "relations of friendship and partnership based on consensus". Lavrov said during a press conference held at the end of the ministerial meeting that the "existing relations between Russia and the GCC countries are relations of friendship and partnership based on mutual respect and take into account the interests of each party".

"The talks showed that we always present our positions in an honest manner and that neither side is working against the other," he said, noting

that relations between the two sides are based on consensus and non-interference in the affairs of the other side. He pointed to the agreement of the two sides to strengthen and diversify economic relations and ties, invest in all available opportunities and activate joint government committees between Russia and each of countries.

Lavrov stressed Russia's readiness "to meet the needs of Arab countries of wheat and grains, stressing that there are no obstacles hindering cooperation in this field". On the other hand, Lavrov expressed his conviction that Syria's return to the Arab League in May contributed to "improving the political situation in the Middle East and strengthening the positions of Arab countries at the international level". He said that the participants in the strategic dialogue expressed their support for Syria's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, and paid attention to the need to advance the process of comprehensive settlement, reconstruction and normalization of relations between Russia and regional countries.

Lavrov also welcomed the normalization of Arab-Iranian relations, saying the resumption of relations between Riyadh and Tehran contributes to creating a positive atmosphere in the region. He stated that the countries participating in the strategic dialogue issued a joint statement and agreed on an action plan for the period from 2023 to 2028. — AFP

## Threads signs up 100 million...

**Continued from Page 1**

Francinfo that Meta was right to try to make sure its apps conformed with the law. "Taking a little time to do so seems to me to be probably good policy," he said, adding that there were plenty of solutions.

Meanwhile, Musk has threatened to sue Meta for stealing trade secrets and intellectual property, claims denied by the company. The billionaire tycoon

## Biden takes tea and talks climate...

**Continued from Page 1**

a "clarion voice" on climate change, White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters on Sunday.

Top financiers and philanthropists were meeting in Windsor to discuss climate finance to boost support for developing nations to cut carbon emissions. Attending the meeting were UK energy security and net zero minister Grant Shapps and Biden's special climate envoy John Kerry. The UK government said more than \$1 trillion is needed by 2030 to help developing economies get on track to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

## Last week the hottest worldwide...

**Continued from Page 1**

A team of researchers looked at data on temperature and mortality from 2015 to 2022 for 823 regions across 35 European countries, covering a total of 543 million people. The researchers from the Barcelona Institute for Global Health and France's health research institute INSERM used models to predict the deaths attributable to temperature for each region in every week of 2022's summer.

They estimated that 61,672 deaths were linked to the heat between May 30 and Sept 4 last year, according to the study. A particularly intense heatwave in the week of July 18-24 caused more than 11,600 deaths alone, the study said. "It is a very high number of deaths," said Hicham Achebak, an

INSERM researcher and study co-author. "We knew the effect of heat on mortality after 2003, but with this analysis, we see that there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to protect the population," he told AFP. More than 70,000 excess deaths were recorded in 2003 during one of the worst heatwaves in European history.

The world has warmed an average of nearly 1.2 C since the mid-1800s, unleashing extreme weather including more intense heatwaves, more severe droughts in some areas and storms made fiercer by rising seas. This year sea surface temperatures have hit unprecedented levels this year, while Antarctic sea ice has shrunk to a record low.

El Nino is a naturally occurring pattern that drives increased heat worldwide, as well as drought in some parts of the world and heavy rains elsewhere. Michael Sparrow, Chief of World Climate Research Program at the WMO, cautioned that more was likely around the corner. "El Nino hasn't really got going yet," he said. — AFP



## International

# Two dead in southwestern Japan after 'heaviest rain ever'

## Situation is such that lives are in danger and safety must be secured

**KURUME:** At least two people were killed in torrential rain in southwest Japan on Monday, with fears the toll could rise, as tens of thousands of residents were told to evacuate their homes. Downpours after a week of steady rain have caused rivers to burst their banks and sodden earth to collapse in deadly landslides, including one that killed a 77-year-old woman.

The woman's home was engulfed overnight in Saga region, the local fire department told AFP. Her husband was recovered conscious and taken to hospital. A landslide in Kurume city, Fukuoka region, swallowed 10 people. Nine of them survived, but a local man in his 70s was confirmed dead, the city's disaster management official told AFP.

Separately, a male body was discovered also in Kurume, next to rice fields near a flooded river, according to the Yomiuri Shimbun and national broadcaster NHK. In Hirokawa town in Fukuoka, the body of an elderly male was found inside a flooded vehicle trapped in an irrigation channel, the Yomiuri said.

Another woman was feared dead after last being seen clinging to a car in rising floodwaters in neighboring Oita region, officials there said. Rain in the region slowed or stopped by Monday afternoon. But earlier in the

day, more than 420,000 people were put under a top-level evacuation warning stating: "Your life is in danger, you need to take action immediately." Nearly two million more in Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Saga, Yamaguchi and Oita were under a lower-level warning, urging them to evacuate if they were in hazardous areas. Japan has five levels of evacuation orders, but people cannot be compelled to leave their homes.

"Rain and wind gusts were very, very strong. There was lightning. It was so horrible," Takashi Onizuka, 62, of Tachiarai town near Kurume in Fukuoka told AFP. The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said the heavy downpours risked flooding and landslides across Fukuoka and Oita. "This is the heaviest rain ever experienced" by the region, Satoshi Sugimoto of JMA's forecast division told reporters. "The situation is such that lives are in danger and safety must be secured," he added.

### 'People's lives first'

Footage on national broadcaster NHK showed a gash in the hillside above a home in Karatsu City that had partly collapsed into a river, with many of its traditional roof tiles smashed or sliding off. Images from elsewhere showed surging rivers washing over

bridges that normally sit well above the waterline, and floodwater turning local streets into streams. The prime minister's office said a task force had been established to coordinate a response to the rains. "We have received reports that several rivers have flooded... and that landslides have occurred in various parts" of the country, top government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters.

"The government is doing its best to get a complete picture of the damage and taking measures under a policy of 'people's lives first'," he added. He warned torrential rain was forecast across much of the country on Tuesday. "If you feel your life is in danger, even just a little, don't hesitate to act," he said.

In Fukuoka's Asakura City, officials said the rain was believed to have peaked but there were still fears about flooding. "Water levels in rivers are rising so we're vigilant against the possibility of overflowing," local official Takaaki Harano told AFP.

Japan is currently in its annual rainy season, which often brings heavy downpours, and sometimes results in flooding and landslides, as well as casualties. Scientists say climate change is intensifying the risk of heavy rain in Japan and elsewhere, because a warmer atmosphere holds more water.



**KURUME:** Residents walk past debris from flooding in the road in the city of Kurume, Fukuoka prefecture, on July 10, 2023, after heavy rains hit wide areas of Kyushu island. — AFP

The weather agency said it had already been raining for more than a week in the region. "The area is very wet due to intermittent rainfall for over a week," Yoshiyuki Toyoguchi, land ministry official in charge of rivers, told reporters.

"Even with a little rain, river levels tend to rise quickly, which will increase risk of flooding." Landslides

are a particular risk in Japan during heavy rains because homes are often built on plains at the bottom of hillsides in the mountainous country.

In 2021, rain triggered a devastating landslide in the central resort town of Atami that killed 27 people. And in 2018, floods and landslides killed more than 200 people in western Japan during the rainy season. — AFP

## China, Solomon Islands ink police cooperation deal

**BEIJING:** China and Solomon Islands signed a new deal on police cooperation Monday, deepening their bilateral partnership four years after the Pacific island nation cut ties with Taiwan and formally established relations with Beijing. The "implementation plan" on policing — effective through 2025 — was one of nine documents signed on Monday following talks between visiting Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and Chinese Premier Li Qiang at Beijing's Great Hall of the People. Li said that the development of China-Solomon Islands relations over the past four years had been "very fruitful".

The Solomons' decision to switch its diplomatic recognition to Beijing was "the correct choice that conforms to the trend of the times", he added. Sogavare, in turn, told Li that his country "has a lot to learn from China's development experience".

Also signed between the two countries was an agreement on a "Sports Technical Assistance Project" for this year's Pacific Games in Solomons capital Honiara, for which Beijing is building the host stadium.

Sogavare also met with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on Monday afternoon, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV reported.

"The two sides announced that China and the Solomon Islands have formally established a comprehensive strategic partnership for the new era, based on mutual respect and common development," CCTV reported.

Sogavare is expected to be in China until Saturday, and is officially opening his country's Beijing embassy as well as visiting the economic powerhouse provinces of Jiangsu and Guangdong. In 2019, China and the Solomons officially established diplomatic relations after Beijing persuaded the poor Pacific nation to sever ties with self-ruled Taiwan, whose territory China claims.

Mounting geopolitical rivalry between China and the United States has brought the two powers to loggerheads in the region. Their jockeying for influence has been a boon to Pacific governments, with aid, loans and construction project windfalls flowing into their coffers to the tune of tens of millions of dollars.

Instead of taking sides between Washington and Beijing, most are welcoming all comers and the new diplomatic and economic capital they bring. "It is not in the interest of our people and country to take sides and align ourselves with interests that are not our interests," Sogavare said at an independence anniversary event on Saturday.

In the face of its rivalry with China, Washington in February reopened its mission in the Solomon Islands



**BEIJING:** Solomon Islands' Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare (2nd L) and China's Premier Li Qiang (2nd R) applaud as both countries' officials exchange signed documents at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on July 10, 2023. — AFP

after a 30-year hiatus. China has also won influence, striking a secretive security deal with the Solomons that allows Beijing's forces to deploy on the islands.

Sogavare's visit will likely fuel concerns that Solomon Islands is drifting closer into China's orbit. Just months after signing the security deal, Sogavare told AFP that he had asked for a "review" of a long-standing defence pact with Australia, while insisting he was not seeking to downgrade relations with Canberra. — AFP

## Spain sweats as temperatures soar in summer heatwave

**MADRID:** Temperatures were soaring across Spain on Monday with the mercury set to touch 44 degrees Celsius (111 Fahrenheit) in the south as the country braced for its second heatwave in a fortnight. The AEMET weather agency said the heat was caused by a mass of hot air arriving from North Africa, indicating it would last until at least Wednesday, with the southern Andalusia region expected to be worst hit.

"The heat will be very intense on both Monday and Tuesday in most of the peninsula as well as the Balearic isles, with temperatures of between 38C and 40C in much of the country and 42C and 44C in parts of Andalusia and (the northeastern region of) Aragon," said AEMET spokesman Ruben del Campo.

Spain's first heatwave of the summer began two weeks ago on June 26 with the mercury pushing above 44C in parts of Andalusia, with the intense heat claiming several lives. Last year, Spain experienced its hottest summer on record since records began in 1916, with soaring temperatures directly responsible for more than 350 deaths from heatstroke and dehydration, figures from the National Statistics Institute (INE) show.

According to the World Meteorological Organization, Europe is the

world's fastest-warming continent, and experts say Spain is likely to be one of the countries worst hit by climate change. Although it has become accustomed to soaring summer temperatures, notably in the south, Spain has experienced an uptick in longer and hotter heatwaves and a worrying shortage of rainfall.

Meanwhile, Switzerland said Monday it experienced its hottest year on record in 2022, with its cherished Alpine glaciers melting at three times the rate previously considered extreme. The record heat had a negative effect on the landlocked European nation's lakes, rivers, forests and agriculture, the environment ministry said in its climate overview for the year.

"For Switzerland, 2022 was the hottest year in history," it said in a statement. "The year 2022 was the warmest and sunniest year since measurements began in 1864. While the annual average temperature for 1991 to 2020 was 5.8 degrees Celsius (42.4 degrees Fahrenheit), that of 2022 was climbed to 7.4C (45.3F)".

In the summer months, temperatures above 36C (97F) were recorded both north and south of the Alps. "Only the scorching summer of 2003... was warmer," the environment ministry said.



**SPAIN:** Tourists protect themselves from the sun while they visit the Royal Palace in Madrid city centre under very high temperatures. Spain is facing its first heatwave of the summer, with temperatures expected to exceed 44 degrees locally in the south of the country. — AFP

The hottest day ever in Switzerland was recorded in Geneva on August 4, with thermometers hitting 38.3C (100.9F).

### Melting away

Swiss glaciers have never lost so much of their volume as in 2022: six percent of the remaining ice melted away last year. "The year 2022 redefines the game, because until then, a loss of two percent was already considered extreme," the overview said.

Small glaciers have "practically disappeared", the environment ministry said, so much so that measurement has been suspended for the Pizol Vadret dal Corvatsch and Schwarzbachfirn glaciers.

Lake Constance reached a record low water level of 394.7 metres between July 15 and August 20, while Lake Lugano and Lake Maggiore were at historically low levels for the first eight months of the year.

Low water levels had a "considerable impact" on hydroelectric power plants, with many forced to suspend operations at points, with production down 15.2 percent on the year before. Temperatures in Switzerland's lakes and rivers often reached 25C (77F) or above. At those temperatures, oxygen levels decrease, with some lake experiencing algae blooms, while the survival of fish is also threatened. — AFP

## Voting resumes after Indian village violence

**KOLKATA:** Voting in local polls in India's West Bengal state resumed on Monday at hundreds of election centres after being disrupted by violence that left 10 people dead, officials said. The state election commission reported seven people were killed on Saturday in election-related violence, and another three died "in post-poll violence" on

Sunday, election commissioner Rajiva Sinha told reporters on Monday.

Opposition parties said at least 16 people died. The election commission reran polls at 697 centres following complaints of violence and electoral malpractice. 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 — as it seeks to expand its reach beyond its Hindi-speaking northern heartlands.

The fierce contest is to elect municipal leaders, with more than 200,000 candidates in the running across the state of 104 million people. West Bengal has been led by Mamata Banerjee since 2011, when her Trinamool party defeated the communist-led

administration that had run the state for the prior three decades.

Banerjee, a fierce critic of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has accused his Hindu-nationalist BJP of attempting to import divisive sectarian politics into the state, which has a large Muslim minority. Modi has in turn accused her administration of endemic corruption. But the roots of political violence in the state stretch back decades, with police recording thousands of murders around election time since the 1960s.

During state polls in 2021 — won emphatically by Trinamool, but with a strong BJP showing — several activists from both parties were shot or hacked to death, their bodies sometimes hung from trees as an intimidation tactic. — AFP

### News in Brief

#### Putin met with Wagner chief

**MOSCOW:** The Kremlin said Monday that President Vladimir Putin had met with Wagner chief Yevgeny Prigozhin on June 29 in the Kremlin, days after the mercenary group attempted to topple Russia's military leadership. "The president gave his assessment of the events of June 24," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, referring to the failed insurrection, adding that Putin also "listened to accounts given by (Wagner) commanders". Just over two weeks after the aborted mutiny, there is still significant uncertainty surrounding the fate of the Wagner group and the deal that ended the rebellion against Russia's top military brass. Under the plan, the mercenary chief and some of his fighters were expected to be exiled to Belarus. Wagner troops that wanted to keep fighting for Russia meanwhile would sign contracts with the conventional army. During the three-and-a-half-hour meeting in the Kremlin with Wagner commanders, Putin "offered them alternative options for employment", including in combat roles. Observers see the rebellion as the biggest challenge to Putin's authority since he came to power. — AFP

#### Macron to host Modi at Louvre

**PARIS:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, guest of honor at France's Bastille Day celebration, will dine with President Emmanuel Macron at the Louvre museum on Friday, Macron's office said. More than 200 guests will join the two leaders on France's national holiday for the dinner in Modi's honor at the world's biggest museum, and are to be treated to a special viewing of a number of iconic works, the presidency said. Modi, who arrives on Thursday for what will be his fifth trip to France, is to meet with Macron for a private dinner before visiting Indian artists who participated in this year's Namaste France festival, an event highlighting cultural links between both countries. On Friday he will attend the traditional Bastille Day military parade, which will this year feature a sizable Indian contingent, have more talks with Macron, and attend a business leader forum, the presidency said. France and India, whose strategic partnership goes back 25 years, are negotiating business deals in several areas, including defence and energy, but French government sources said they may not be finalized in time for Modi's visit. — AFP

#### Berlin condemns clashes

**BERLIN:** The German government on Monday condemned clashes with police at a controversial Eritrean music festival in the town of Giessen during which more than two dozen officers were hurt. A foreign ministry spokesman told reporters it was "extremely unfortunate that there was violence against police" at the weekend event. About a thousand police were deployed in Giessen, a city of 80,000 people north of Frankfurt, after last year's festival degenerated into violence. They fired tear gas and used water cannon to quell unrest on Saturday in which 26 officers were injured, mainly in incidents of "stone throwing," regional police said on Twitter, adding that around 100 arrests were made. The organizers are accused of being close to the authorities in Eritrea, a secretive East African state whose rights record has been fiercely attacked by watchdogs. The spokesman said foreign ministry officials had made clear to Eritrean diplomats in Germany last week "that Eritrean conflicts must not play out on German soil". Giessen had unsuccessfully appealed to a court to ban the festival. — AFP



## Business

TUESDAY, JULY 11, 2023



KUWAIT: Eaman Al-Roudhan and Abdulrahman Al-Thehaiban with Zain and Google Cloud executives.

# Zain teams up with Google Cloud to accelerate its digitization journey

## Company selects Anthos to enable Core Cloud and mission critical applications

**KUWAIT:** Zain on Monday announced a collaboration in Kuwait with Google Cloud, wherein the company has selected Anthos, a hybrid and multi-cloud platform that enables enterprises to run workloads on premise, on the cloud, and at the edge consistently using an open model that brings choice and flexibility. The step comes to reaffirm Zain's relentless pursuit of achieving full digital transformation across its entire business.

Commenting on the partnership, Eaman Al-Roudhan said: "We're proud to be the first company in Kuwait to launch the Hybrid Cloud Management platform with Google Cloud, setting a solid foundation for our core cloud strategy deployment and elevating our enterprise agility."

"This collaboration comes at a significant moment where Google Cloud recently announced its intent to open a new cloud region in Kuwait, a step that will

gives choice and flexibility to our customers and collaborates freely with all the vendors in the market."

Today more than ever, companies from across industries, especially telecom operators, are transforming every aspect of their business operations, aspiring to reimagine their application portfolio and reinforce their infrastructures with the most advanced technologies to drive higher efficiencies and lower costs. Zain has long started its digital transformation journey, continuing to see the fruitful results of its early investment in digitization across its entire business.

Zain has partnered with Google Cloud to expand on its transformation journey by embracing Anthos as its hybrid cloud management platform of choice. Anthos is built on the firm foundation of Google Kubernetes Engine (GKE), Google Cloud's fully managed Kubernetes service, that helps enterprises innovate faster and provide customer services as well as enterprise solutions in a secure and reliable cost-effective way. Zain has selected Anthos as a foundation layer for its Telco Cloud to utilize it for a wide range of workloads to drive more enterprise solutions to the edge, such as computer vision, image recognition, pattern detection, or any number of other emerging use cases for edge applications that are often forced to rely on fragmented solutions across on-premises and cloud deployments.

Eaman Al-Roudhan recently joined a special panel discussion that coincided with the launch of Google Cloud's new region in Qatar. The panel, Fostering In-



KUWAIT: Eaman Al-Roudhan (right) and Abdulrahman Al-Thehaiban seal the agreement.

novation with Google Cloud, saw the Zain Kuwait CEO discuss innovation and digital transformation opportunities in the region with other regional executives.

Through its solid strategic partnerships ecosystem with the world's biggest tech players, Zain continues to lead the way towards a new stage of empowering digital transformation within the public and private sectors. The company offers an extensive portfolio of solutions like cloud computing, cybersecurity, 5G, and much more to serve the needs of all public and private sector institutions, serving the community's needs and achieving the nation's developmental goals.

- Eaman Al-Roudhan: Proud to launch Kuwait's first Hybrid Cloud Management platform with Google Cloud, setting a solid foundation for our core cloud strategy deployment and elevating our enterprise agility.

- Abdulrahman Al-Thehaiban: Zain has been renowned for its innovative approach in the telecom space, and we are really proud to launch the first Anthos project in Kuwait. We truly believe that our open and multi cloud technology is key today because it gives choice and flexibility to our customers and collaborates freely with all the vendors in the market."

The announcement was made at the Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh, where CEO Eaman Al-Roudhan welcomed Abdulrahman Al-Thehaiban, Managing Director, Middle East, Turkey and Africa, Google Cloud in an official visit. The partnership was sealed with the attendance of Zain Kuwait and Google Cloud's executive teams.

support our years-long vision to accelerate digital transformation within the public and private sectors," Al-Roudhan added.

Abdulrahman Al-Thehaiban said: "Zain has been renowned for its innovative approach in the telecom space, and we are really proud to launch the first Anthos project in Kuwait. We truly believe that our open and multi cloud technology is key today because it

## Algeria, TotalEnergies sign new contracts to boost gas output

**ALGIERS:** Algeria's state oil company Sonatrach said Sunday it had signed contracts to boost gas production under an existing agreement worth about \$740 million with French giant TotalEnergies. The companies will increase output from two Sahara desert fields in southeastern Algeria, for export to France and elsewhere in Europe, the company said in a statement. They also signed "a memorandum of understanding in the field of energy transition and renewable energies", it added.

Under existing contracts the companies exploit the Tin Fouye-Tabankort area's TFT II and TFT South fields to produce gas, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and condensate. Sonatrach recalled that "the TFT II contract provides for development investments for an amount of \$332 million, permitting the recovery of 43 billion cubic meters of gas, 4.3 million tons of condensate and 5.7 million tons of LPG". It added that "the development investments of the second agreement, TFT South, are estimated at \$407 million, with a recovery of 11.5 billion cubic meters of gas, 1.3 million tons of condensate and 1.6 million tons LPG". Sonatrach said that the new contracts signed Sunday will bring the combined production of TFT II and TFT South to more than 100,000 barrels oil equivalent per day by 2026 against a current production of about 60,000 BOE.—AFP



PARIS: Chairman and CEO of TotalEnergies Patrick Pouyanne arrives at the Elysee Palace for a meeting in this November 8, 2022, file photo.—AFP



## Birds or rivers on euro notes? Citizens can weigh in

**FRANKFURT:** The European Central Bank launched a survey Monday asking citizens to weigh in on the redesign of euro banknotes, with rivers, birds and European culture among the shortlisted themes. "We want Europeans to identify with the design of euro banknotes, which is why they will play an active role in selecting the new theme," ECB president Christine Lagarde said in a statement.

The online survey, running until August 31, asks respondents to share their opinions on seven possible themes for the new notes.

These include "Birds: free, resilient, inspiring" and "Rivers: the waters of life in Europe", as well as more abstract ideas such as "The future is yours", "European culture" and "Our Europe, ourselves". The ECB, which has also tasked a research company with asking a representative sample of euro area citizens

the same questions, will announce the chosen theme next year.

A design competition will follow and Europeans will then again be asked to choose their favorite options for the euro bills, which come in six denominations. The ECB will announce the final decision on the future design, and on when the new notes will be produced and issued, in 2026.

The Frankfurt institution announced in late 2021 that it wanted a fresh look for the 20-year-old banknotes. The original design for the bloc's single currency was fraught with political tension, and ended up consisting of symbolic illustrations of architecture to avoid stirring national rivalries. ECB officials have expressed the hope that by involving the public in the facelift, younger Europeans will feel more connected to the single currency. Regularly updating banknotes is also necessary to stay a step ahead of counterfeiters "in a world where reproduction technologies are rapidly evolving", the statement added. "We are working on a new series of high-tech banknotes with a view to preventing counterfeiting and reducing environmental impact," said ECB executive board member Fabio Panetta. "We are committed to cash and to ensuring that paying with public money is always an option."—AFP

## Oil prices drop over growing demand jitters

**LONDON:** Oil prices dropped on Monday after recording their biggest weekly gain since April as demand concerns weighed on prospects of tight supply. Brent, the benchmark for two-thirds of the world's oil, was trading 0.64 percent lower at \$77.97 a barrel at 3.20pm Kuwait time, while West Texas Intermediate was down 0.70 percent at \$73.34 a barrel. On Friday, Brent settled 2.55 percent higher at \$78.47 a barrel while WTI was up 2.87 percent at \$73.86.

China's consumer inflation rate eased to zero last month while factory-gate prices fell further. The consumer price index (CPI) was flat year-on-year, compared with a 0.2 percent gain seen in May, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

The producer price index (PPI) fell for a ninth straight month in June, down 5.4 percent from a year earlier, recording its sharpest drop since 2015. China's economy, which rebounded after the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions at the start of the year, lost momentum in May, posting weaker retail sales and manufacturing output while registering a slowdown in the property sector.

The country is aiming for gross domestic product growth of 5 percent in 2023, which is lower than last year's growth estimate of 5.5 percent. Oil prices posted a gain last week after Saudi Arabia and Russia announced output cuts for August. The kingdom will extend its production cut of one million barrels per day, which was initially announced for July, for another month. Russia will also cut its oil supplies by 500,000 bpd next month on top of the output reductions that have already been announced, state news agency Tass reported last week.—Agencies



# Iraq reaches agreements with TotalEnergies for \$10bn deal

## Projects aim to improve Iraq's power supply, harnessing solar energy

**BAGHDAD:** Iraq on Monday signed agreements with TotalEnergies for a \$10 billion set of projects that aim to improve the country's electricity supply through capturing flared gas and harnessing solar energy. The deal, originally unveiled in 2021 but delayed by disagreements over the terms, was signed by TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanne and Iraq's Oil Minister Hayan Abdel Ghani at a ceremony held at Iraq's Ministry of Oil headquarters in Baghdad after lengthy negotiations.

"Today, we commit with Total and all partners to serious and fruitful cooperation to begin implementing these contracts in the field," said Abdel Ghani during a speech before the signing of the four projects. "TotalEnergies will retain 45 percent of the project, Basrah Oil Company 30 percent, and QatarEnergy will join us with 25 percent," Pouyanne told AFP. "In one month, the concrete steps will begin on the ground, including infrastructure construction," Iraqi oil official Bassem Khdeir told AFP, adding that "in three years, the projects will bear fruit". The first part of the \$10 billion Gas Growth Integrated Project (GGIP) aims to recover flared gas from oil fields to

power electricity-generation plants. Another will involve the construction of a one-gigawatt solar plant to supply electricity to the Basra regional grid. The deal also aims at increasing production to 210,000 barrels per day at Artawi oil field in the south of the country. The GGIP also includes the construction of a seawater treatment plant to provide water used in oil production — an alternative to using fresh water from rivers and aquifers.

The project will eventually produce five million barrels of water per day, according to officials at the ceremony. Pouyanne told AFP that work will start on the ground over the summer. "The first phase of the solar plant will come in two years, and then we will work to implement a first phase on the oil field, which should increase production to 120,000 barrels per day within two years as well," he added.

Pouyanne said the entire set of projects is expected to be completed by 2027-2028, putting the total cost at over \$10 billion. When the Iraqi government first announced the deal in September 2021, it spoke of a \$27 billion project, a figure that factored in operating costs over the years. — AFP



**BAGHDAD, Iraq:** Basra Oil Company's Director General Bassem Abdul Karim (right) and CEO of French energy firm TotalEnergies Patrick Pouyanne sign the Gas Growth Integrated Project (GGIP) agreement during an official ceremony in Baghdad on July 10, 2023. — AFP

## Gulf Bank: Ten tips to consider during and after traveling

**KUWAIT:** As part of its keenness to promote financial literacy in society, Gulf Bank continues to support the Let's Be Aware "Diraya" campaign for the third consecutive year — by broadcasting and spreading awareness and educational materials through social media, the Bank's website, and other channels.

Gulf Bank's Corporate Communications Officer, Mohammad Al-Hebeshi, reviewed a number of tips for customers to consider during and after travelling. This is to ensure that they use their bank cards safely and to enjoy the many services provided by Gulf Bank. The tips are as follows:

- Never share your PIN or OTP with anyone and ensure that the card is visible to you while making any transactions.
- Ensure to carefully read the contents of the OTP message, the name of the store and the payment amount before using the OTP.
- Ensure you have sufficient credit limits and check your account balance regularly.
- When using ATMs, use the palm of your hand to cover your PIN number and do not ask for any assistance from anyone in the event of encountering any problems with the device during the withdrawal.
- When making any payments, ensure to check the amount before entering the PIN number.
- Ensure to review your card expenditures on regular basis through Gulf Bank's website or Mobile Application.
- In the event of losing your card, you can stop your card through the mobile banking application or by calling the Customer Service Center
- If you encounter any problems with your cards, contact the Customer Service Center immediately.
- It is always recommended to pay using the local currency of the country you are visiting.
- Ensure to change your PIN number upon your return and review all your card statements. In case of any discrepancy, the bank must be contacted immediately.

The Central Bank of Kuwait, in cooperation with Kuwait Banking Association, has launched the Let's Be Aware "Diraya" campaign in 2021, to acquaint bank customers with the most important banking services provided to them. This is to ensure the safety of transactions and to enhance financial inclusion, as well as monetary and economic stability — through comprehensive awareness of customers' rights and obligations.

The Diraya campaign also aims to introduce the advantages of electronic financial transactions and ways to avoid the risks arising from them to achieve cybersecurity.

## Egypt's inflation edged higher to 35.7% in June

**CAIRO:** Inflation in Egypt edged higher at the fastest growth rate in June since December 2009, according to figures released on Monday by Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS). Inflation in Egypt's urban parts soared sharply in June, to an annual rate of 35.7 percent, from 32.7 percent in May, CAPMAS figures showed. On a monthly basis, the June inflation rate in Egypt declined to 2.1 percent from 2.7 percent in May, the agency said.

The rise in annual consumer prices was fueled largely by a 65.9 percent increase in food and beverage costs, Bloomberg reported. The country is working to secure a \$3 billion deal with the International Monetary Fund and has devalued the Egyptian pound three times since March 2022. The latest devaluation was in January 2023, and the pound has been stable since then. The devaluation helped drive up the cost of most imported goods and hindered government efforts to cut spending as it battled its worst foreign-currency crisis in years. Egypt's government recently raised the



## Syrian pound falls to near 10,000 against dollar on black market

**DAMASCUS:** The value of the Syrian pound plunged Monday to nearly 10,000 against the dollar on the black market, websites monitoring the exchange rate said, following years of conflict and crippling sanctions. The embattled currency stood at just 47 pounds to the dollar before Syria's civil war broke out in 2011. The conflict has since killed more than 500,000 people, displaced millions and battered the country's infrastructure and industry. The pound hit a new record low of 9,750 to the dollar Monday, according to the unofficial exchange rate monitoring sites which traders use to determine the price of goods. The official exchange rate approved by the central bank is 6,532 pounds to the dollar.

Damascus has blamed the country's economic woes on Western sanctions and the knock-on effects of an economic collapse in neighboring Lebanon that has stemmed the flow of dollars into government-held areas. The new plunge comes in the wake of Syria's recent return to the Arab fold after years of isolation, and as Damascus hopes wealthy Gulf countries could help fund reconstruction.

"The war has not ended yet, and the reasons for the drop in the pound's value have not changed," said economist Ammar Youssef, pointing to "ongoing sanctions blocking exports". "The Arab opening towards Damascus hasn't started to have an impact yet, particularly as it hasn't been accompanied by concrete economic steps," he added.

The pound's collapse — from 5,000 to the dollar in October — has driven up the price of basic goods and aggravated hardship in a war-ravaged country hit by crippling shortages of fuel and electricity. An average monthly salary of 130,000 pounds, according to figures reported in Syrian media, is now worth little over \$13.

The United Nations says some 90 percent of the population is poor, while the UN World Food Programme estimates that more than 12 million people in the country are food insecure. — AFP

prices of some subsidized commodities such as rice and sugar. President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi warned recently that the nation would not be able to bear more cost increases. His statements are widely interpreted as an attempt to downplay expectations of another devaluation any time soon.

Inflation has been a key concern for the central bank. The bank's monetary policy committee last month left interest rates unchanged at a level far below inflation. The central bank set its target price inflation rate at 7 percent, plus or minus 2 percentage points, by the fourth quarter of 2024.

Central bank Governor Hassan Abdalla earlier this year suggested higher rates could do little to contain price growth that he described as stoked mainly by supply issues. The committee is slated to meet next on August 3. Meanwhile, Egypt's agricultural exports hit a record high in 2023, estimated at 4.65 million tons, according to an official statement by the Egyptian Minister of Agriculture, as reported by Sky News Arabia Sunday. An official at the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture told Sky News Arabia that the increase came after the government enacted several measures to bolster demand from various international markets. Egypt's Minister of Agriculture Mohamed el-Quseir said that the year 2023, to date, has seen an increase of 717.896 thousand tons, compared to the same duration in 2022. — Agencies

## China inflation flat in June as economy struggles

**BEIJING:** Chinese inflation was flat last month while producer prices sank more than expected, official data showed Monday, in the latest sign of weakness in the world's second-largest economy. The consumer price index for June was down from the 0.2 percent seen in May, according to the National Bureau of Statistics, and was worse than expected as domestic demand slowed.

A 7.2 percent annual drop in the cost of pork, the staple meat in China, as well as falling oil prices that made transportation cheap, dragged down the cost of the essential goods basket, the NBS said.

Producer prices — which measure the cost of goods at the factory gate — tumbled 5.4 percent

on-year, following a 4.6 percent slide in May. Economists polled by Bloomberg had expected prices to sink five percent. Poor global demand and a steep drop in raw material costs have also put downward pressure on factory prices, the NBS said.

Economic growth has slowed sharply since April after Beijing lifted strict COVID rules at the end of last year, while the yuan sits at a seven-month low against the dollar as exports drop. Authorities are coming under increasing pressure to step in with stimulus but other than a few small interest rate cuts and pledges of action there has been little of substance out of Beijing. Ongoing trade tensions between the US and China have also dragged on the economy, with US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen on Sunday wrapping up a visit to Beijing with no signs of a breakthrough.

Yellen said her talks with Chinese officials were "productive" but admitted there were "significant disagreements". China has set a growth target of "around five percent" this year, one of its lowest in decades. Growth figures for the second quarter will be released on July 17. — AFP



**SHENYANG, China:** This photo taken on July 10, 2023 shows people shopping for food at an open air market in Shenyang, in China's northeast Liaoning province. — AFP

## EU tries again with new framework for data flows to US

**BRUSSELS:** The European Commission said Monday it has adopted a new legal framework to protect Europeans' personal data in exchanges with the United States — its third attempt to get past legal challenges. "Today we take an important step to provide trust to (EU) citizens that their data is safe, to deepen our economic ties between the EU and the US, and at the same time to reaffirm our shared values," commission chief Ursula von der Leyen said. The announcement was made possible after US President Joe Biden last year issued an executive order updating US intelligence agencies' rules when it came to snooping on international data flows to give "safeguards" to European Union citizens and residents, the EU executive said.

Umbrella groups representing tech companies, whose business models depend on transatlantic data exchanges, hailed the announcement of the EU-US Data Privacy Framework. It was "good news for thousands of businesses," one of them, DigitalEurope, said in a statement. A US grouping, The Software Alliance (BSA), said it would "bolster the management of data across borders — a cornerstone of our modern economy — and improve safeguards for citizens of the EU and US alike".

### Challenge looming

But Max Schrems, an Austrian legal activist whose challenges led to EU courts shooting down two previous EU-US attempts on data transfers, said this one, too, would fail to satisfy EU law. The latest framework still has "the fundamental problem" that the United States "takes the view that only US persons are worthy of constitutional rights" protecting them from American electronic snooping, he said.

He vowed to challenge the latest effort, predicting the case "will be likely back at the Court of Justice (of the EU) in a matter of months". EU justice commissioner Didier Reynders told journalists he had "no illusion" about the coming likely legal challenge.

"But it's maybe useful to test the new US system before to challenge such an adequacy decision," he said. Reynders added, in an apparent swipe at Schrems' non-profit European Centre for Digital Rights, that "maybe the access to the court of justice is a small part of the business model of some civil society organizations".

### Presidential order

The European Commission argued that the new framework offered "significant improvements" over the previous data-transfer mechanism, called Privacy Shield, which the EU court deemed inadequate. The commission said US companies signing onto the EU-US Data Privacy Framework would be required to delete Europeans' personal data when it was no longer needed for the purpose it was collected. Its scope applies to citizens of the 27-nation EU and of associated countries Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein, as well as residents in all those countries.

They would have the right to redress if they found their data was wrongly handled by US companies. Under US law, Americans are protected from electronic spying by US intelligence agencies by their constitution, but all other nationalities are fair game. While Biden's October 2022 executive order does not extend that same protection to Europeans, it does oblige US intelligence agencies to show data-collection on foreigners is "proportionate" to a specified US national security objective.

It also adds oversight to the handling of personal data collected, and offers a path to "redress" for citizens of "qualifying states", which is meant to include those of the EU. A new US Data Protection Review Court, made up of experts from outside the American government, would be able to review data decisions made inside the US office of the Director of National Intelligence. — AFP



## Business

# NBK Capital integrates SmartWealth service with NBK Mobile Banking App

## SmartWealth offers its clients customized investment plans: Al-Nusif

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to enrich the comprehensive digital experience of clients by providing them with integrated banking and investment products, services, and solutions from NBK and NBK Capital that meet all their needs and expectations. In this context, NBK Capital has integrated the SmartWealth investment service with the NBK Mobile Banking App, which allows app users to start investing in global markets with a diversified investment plan through a quick, simplified process using just their smartphones.

This offering is the first of its kind in the region where a bank's clients are able to digitally open an investment account in an easy and secure way through the bank's mobile banking app. Through NBK Mobile Banking App, SmartWealth investors will be able to open an account, view the details, holdings, and performance of their investment plan, as well as transfer money directly from their bank accounts to fund their SmartWealth investment account.

SmartWealth is a fully-digital investment service that aims to make investing easier for everyone. It targets investors planning for their long-term financial goals such as buying a home, saving for children's education, retirement, or general invest-

ing. It provides clients with a simple, easy way to invest in multi-asset investment plans comprised of securities that provide exposure to stocks, bonds, real estate and commodities. The service also offers clients the opportunity to invest in global markets like the United States, Europe, Asia, and emerging markets using local funding methods.

These investment plans are customized to each client according to their preferred level of risk and future objectives, allowing them to save and invest their money for the long term even if they do not have any previous investing experience.

On this occasion, Hisham Al-Nusif, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait said: "Enabling our clients to invest with SmartWealth through the NBK Mobile Banking App comes in line with our strategy to offer our clients an integrated digital banking experience by enriching the digital investment solutions available for them."

Al-Nusif emphasized that NBK strives to provide all clients' needs through the NBK Mobile Banking App, to help enrich their digital banking experience and allow them to make all their transactions anytime and anywhere. "SmartWealth has

achieved great success, as reflected in the interest of investors looking to invest their money in an easy way that suits their lifestyles and long-term future financial goals," Al-Nusif highlighted. SmartWealth is a service by NBK Capital, the investment arm of NBK, which provides clients with investment advice to help them in the execution of their investment plans. Al-Nusif noted that NBK Capital always strives to provide clients with the best-in-class long-term investment solutions, spearheaded by SmartWealth's digital investment solutions.

Clients can open a SmartWealth account through the NBK Mobile Banking App, via SmartWealth's dedicated website and mobile app, or through the designated relationship manager at any of NBK's branches.



Hisham Al-Nusif



## Wrist blood pressure monitor Huawei Watch D in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Huawei Consumer Business Group on Monday announced the launch of Huawei Watch D - its first wrist-type ECG and blood pressure monitoring device.

Huawei Watch D brings the convenience of health monitoring to consumers' wrists, enabling wrist-type ECG and blood pressure monitoring anywhere. Huawei Watch D is light at just 40.9g. It has multiple workout modes and health monitoring functions. It also uses a mini pump to measure blood pressure accurately anytime and anywhere. Huawei Watch D is the new choice for consumers as the everyday health monitoring and care companion.

The Huawei Watch D is compatible with Huawei devices as well as other Android and iOS devices. It is available in Kuwait from Huawei's official website and select retailers.

### Innovative hardware

Hypertension is the most common chronic disease worldwide with billions of people needing close monitoring of blood pressure, along with long-term medication, to keep the body in check. The significant breakthrough with Huawei Watch D is that it supports accurate blood pressure measurement and monitoring anywhere in real time.

The accuracy of the blood pressure measurement is often being affected by the tightness and wear position on the wrist for traditional smartwatches. Thanks to the high-resolution pressure sensor, feedback pressure control circuit and low-flow airway of Huawei Watch D, the precise pressure measurement system can maintain a pressure measurement error within  $\pm 3\text{mmHg}$ .

### ECG features

Huawei Watch D is not only a blood pressure sensor but is also a smartwatch that supports heart rate measurement. It is placed with an ECG high-performance sensor module that supports recording ECG data and immediately generates ECG reports. In addition, it also supports ECG monitoring that reminds the user to perform ECG measurements as soon as an abnormal heart rate is detected.

### A health assistant on the wrist

Huawei Watch D is also an excellent health management device, thanks to the comprehensive health management features. The watch monitors your SpO2, allowing you to set automatic low blood oxygen level reminders and provide intelligent monitoring of SpO2 level. You also get the Huawei TruSleep 2.0TM sleep monitoring feature on the watch, which is the most advanced infrared sleep detection technology available. This allows the watch to perform sleep stage monitoring, real-time heart rate monitoring and sleep breathing monitoring. Besides, the watch also supports stress monitoring, skin temperature detection, etc.

### Robust 7-day battery life

Combined with the smart mode, it offers 7 days of long battery life, which ensures users can wear it and use it continuously without having to charge it frequently.

Since 2000, smartwatch technology has been evolving. Today, with the launch of Huawei Watch D, it sees a breakthrough in features, which have gone further in terms of health management indicating smartwatches have moved forward to a new level.



## Signs of human era, from nuclear fallout to microplastics

PARIS, France: As scientists make the case that humans have fundamentally transformed the planet enough to warrant our own geological epoch, another question arises: is there anything left untouched by humanity's presence?

Soaring greenhouse gases, ubiquitous microplastics, pervasive "forever chemicals", the global upheaval of animals, even old mobile phones and chicken bones — all have been put forward as evidence that the world entered the Anthropocene, or era of humans, in the mid-20th century.

Jan Zalasiewicz, a British geologist who chaired the Anthropocene Working Group for over a decade, paused for a moment when asked if there was anywhere on Earth that lacked signs of human influence. "It's hard to think of a more remote place" than the Pine Island glacier in Antarctica, Zalasiewicz told AFP.

Yet when scientists drilled deep below the glacier's ice a few years ago, they found traces of plutonium. It was lingering fallout from nuclear weapon tests that began in 1945, leaving behind a radioactive presence unlike anything before.

Zalasiewicz said these radionuclides represented perhaps "the sharpest signal" to mark the start of the Anthropocene epoch 70 years ago. But "there's an awful lot to choose from," he added. On Tuesday, the Anthropocene Working Group is expected to announce its choice for the epoch's "golden spike" location, selecting the site that most clearly represents the

many ways humans have changed the world. However the announcement will not make the Anthropocene an official geological time unit just yet, as the world's geologists continue to sift through the evidence.

### The weight of humanity

Another major calling card of the Anthropocene will likely come as little surprise: the rapid surge in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that are heating the world. Many things changed "once humans developed the technology to pull fossilized sunshine — in the form of oil, coal and gas — out of the ground," Zalasiewicz said. Humans have consumed more energy since 1950 than was used in the previous 11,700 years of the Holocene epoch, the Anthropocene scientists have shown.

This new power was used to dominate the world in a way not previously possible. Both land and animals were deployed to feed the exploding human population. Humans and their livestock make up 96 percent of the biomass of all land mammals on the planet, with wild mammals representing just four percent, researchers estimated in 2018.

Supermarket chickens, bred by humans to grow far larger than natural, account for two thirds of the biomass of all birds, Zalasiewicz said. Humans also reshuffled species across the globe, introducing invasive species such as rats to even the most remote Pacific islands.



### Technofossils, forever chemicals

In 2020, researchers estimated that the mass of all objects made by humans has now exceeded the weight of all living things on the planet. The Anthropocene researchers called these objects "technofossils". Successive generations of mobile phones, which so quickly become obsolete, were just one example of a technofossil that will "be part of the Anthropocene record," Zalasiewicz said.

Smaller pieces of plastic called microplastics have been detected on the planet's highest peaks and at the bottom of the deepest oceans.

Substances called PFAS or "forever chemicals," created for products such as non-stick cookware, are also being increasingly identified across the world. Pesticides, fertilizers, increasing levels of nitrogen of phosphorus, even the buried skeletons of humans — the list of potential Anthropocene markers goes on. The scientists say that hundreds of thou-

sands of years into the future, all of these markers will be clearly preserved to give our future ancestors — or any other beings who care to look — insight into this human era.

But what will this future geologist see happen next? "One of the signals that you would want to see from the Anthropocene is humanity responding in a positive way," said Mark Williams, a British palaeontologist and member of the Anthropocene Working Group.

The fossil record does not yet show a mass extinction, but one "is now very much on the cards," he told AFP. "We go two ways from here," he added.

So is there somewhere left on Earth that does not bear a human fingerprint? The scientists agreed that the only such place was likely somewhere under the ice in Antarctica. But if nothing changes, these ice sheets will be steadily melted by global warming, Zalasiewicz warned. — AFP



## US Fed official calls for increase to bank capital requirements

WASHINGTON: A senior Federal Reserve official has proposed raising capital requirements for large US banks as part of a "comprehensive" series of measures to tighten banking regulation and supervision. The proposals announced Monday by the Fed's vice chair for supervision, Michael Barr, cover a wide range of issues aimed at strengthening oversight of banks with more than \$100 billion in assets.

This would include mid-sized institutions, which came under significant stress earlier this year after a bank run spurred by concern about how lenders like Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) had managed their interest rate risk.

"A threshold of \$100 billion would subject

more banks to our most risk-sensitive capital rules compared to the current framework," Barr told a conference in Washington in prepared remarks.

The current rules only apply to firms that are internationally active or have \$700 billion or more in assets, he said. "Our recent experience shows that even banks of this size can cause stress that spreads to other institutions and threatens financial stability," he said.

The proposals are equivalent to "requiring the largest banks hold an additional two percentage points of capital," he continued. Capital requirements are the financial buffers banks must hold to guard against potential losses. "By strengthening capital standards, we are ensuring that businesses have credit to grow and hire workers, and deal with the ups and downs in the economy," Barr added. Other proposals he put forward include introducing a long-term debt requirement for all large banks.

"Long-term debt improves the ability of a bank to be resolved upon failure because the long-term debt can be converted to equity and used to absorb losses," he said. — AFP

## TotalEnergies oil project 'a disaster' for Ugandans: HRW

NAIROBI: Human Rights Watch (HRW) on Monday urged a halt to a major East African oil project led by French giant TotalEnergies, warning of dire consequences for the environment and local communities.

TotalEnergies and the China National Offshore Oil Corporation signed a \$10-billion agreement last year to develop Ugandan oilfields and ship the crude through a 1,445-kilometre (900-mile) pipeline to Tanzania's Indian Ocean port of Tanga. The East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) has run into strong opposition from rights activists and environmental groups, and faced legal action in France and criticism in the European Parliament.

TotalEnergies says those displaced by the project have been fairly compensated and measures have been taken to protect the environment. But HRW says the mega-project will irreparably harm fragile ecosystems, and alleges that some of the 100,000 people expected to be displaced by its development have been poorly treated. Researchers conducted over 90 interviews in March and April this year, including with 75 displaced families, many of whom said they had received delayed or inadequate compensation.

Others told HRW they were pressured into selling their land. "EACOP has been a disaster for the tens of thousands who have lost the land that provided food for their families and an income to send their children to school, and who received too little compensation from TotalEnergies," said Felix Horne, senior environment researcher at HRW. "EACOP is also a disaster for the planet and the project should not be completed."

### 'Rights violations'

Farmers told HRW they went into debt waiting years for compensation, with campaigners documenting 37 cases where children were allegedly forced to drop out of school because their families could not pay fees. Some signed compensation agreements in English, a language they couldn't read, while others told researchers "the presence of government and security officials at public meetings contributed to an aura of intimidation", HRW said. — AFP



Lifestyle



This undated handout photo shows a group of Thai Navy divers in Tham Luang cave during the rescue operation for the 12 boys and their football team coach trapped in the cave at Khun Nam Nang Non Forest Park.



Traditional performers and lights are seen inside the Tham Luang Cave in Mae Sai district in the northern province of Chiang Rai during an event to mark the five-year anniversary of the "Wild Boars" youth football team's rescue from inside the flooded cave.



This handout video grab shows a member of the Thai youth football team being moved on a stretcher during a rescue operation.

# 'WE MUST NOT FORGET': THAILAND MARKS CAVE RESCUE ANNIVERSARY

**H**undreds of people gathered on Monday to mark the five-year anniversary of the dramatic rescue against impossible odds of 12 young footballers from a flooded cave in northern Thailand. Now in their late teens, the boys and their coach, Ekapol Chantawong, descended into the spotlight chambers of the Tham Luang cave complex to pay tribute to the thousands of people who worked for 18 days and nights to get them out.



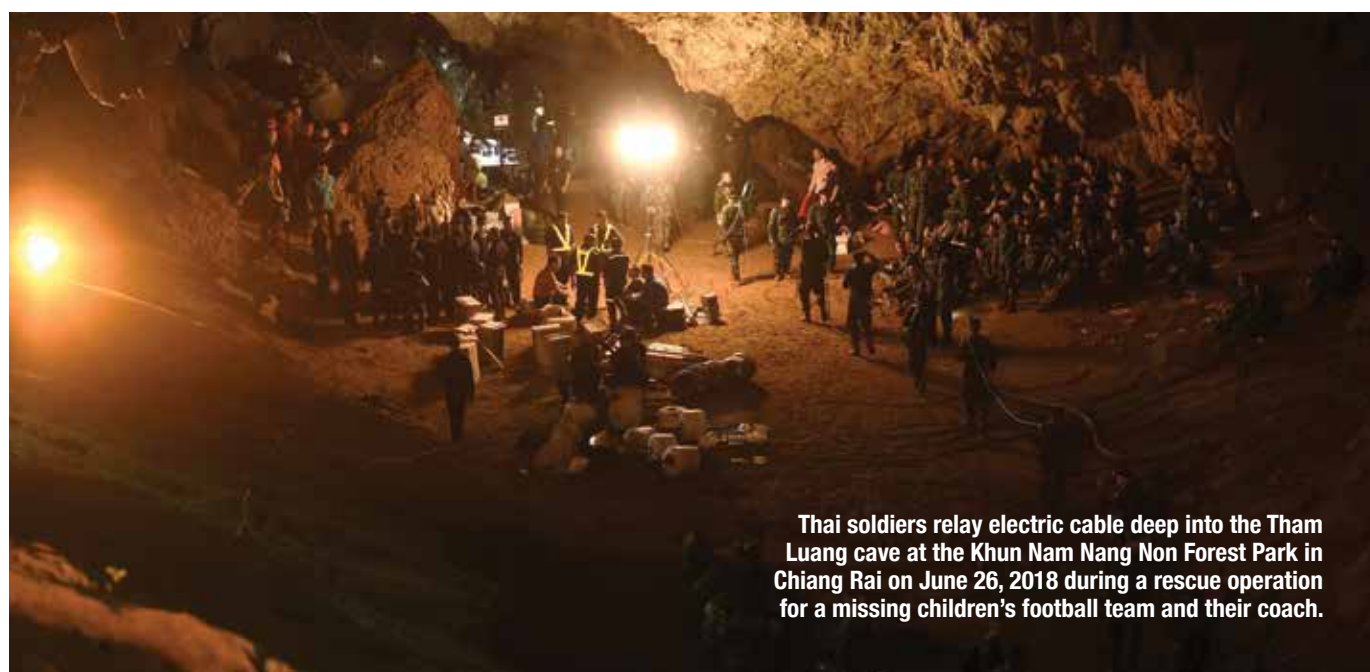
Relatives and friends of members of the Thai "Wild Boars" youth football team take part in a Buddhist alms ceremony outside the Tham Luang Cave.

The "Wild Boars" team had entered the caves in June 2018 and were trapped when rains flooded the complex, emerging after a daring international rescue operation to global acclaim. "If it weren't for these people we wouldn't have survived, and wouldn't have been alive this day," Ekkapol said. "I'd like to say thank you to all of you from the bottom of my heart."

But the joyful anniversary was tinged with sadness following the death of 17-year-old captain Duangphet Promthep, who passed away while on a football scholarship in Britain earlier this year. His former teammates each laid white flowers at a memorial image of him outside the caves, surrounded by crowds in the bright sunlight and vivid jungle flora.

A video tribute was also played inside the cave for ex-Chiang Rai governor Narongsak Osatanakorn, who won plaudits for his handling of the incident, and who died last month.

"We must not forget the efforts of everyone involved in the rescue mis-



Thai soldiers relay electric cable deep into the Tham Luang cave at the Khun Nam Nang Non Forest Park in Chiang Rai on June 26, 2018 during a rescue operation for a missing children's football team and their coach.

sion, especially of those who are no longer here with us," said Varawut Silpa-archa, minister of natural resources and environment. Offerings were also made to Jao Mae Nang Nong — a legendary princess said to be the spirit of the caves in which she supposedly died, and who was frequently invoked for strength during the rescue.



This aerial picture shows the road leading to the visitor centre for the Tham Luang cave, where 12 boys from the "Wild Boars" football team and their coach were trapped a year earlier, in the Mae Sai district of Chiang Rai province.

### Miraculous rescue

The boys were on a day trip to the cave complex on June 23, 2018, when heavy rains flooded the complex via underground waterways. They were feared dead until two British cave divers negotiated a series of narrow waterways and corridors and found them on July 2, trapped in a deep chamber, four kilometers (2.5 miles) from the

entrance. The next hurdle was safely moving the boys and their coach out of the caves.

In a highly risky operation, they were sedated, dressed in wetsuits and breathing apparatus, and hauled through the complex by foreign cave hobbyists, expert divers, and a team of Thai navy SEALs including Saman Kunan, who died during the rescue. Despite the odds, the boys and their coach all made it out alive.

Adul Sam-on, one of the footballers who shot to fame after he thanked the divers who found them in English, was granted Thai nationality following the rescue, as were his coach and two teammates. Speaking on Monday, the now-19-year-old said he had just graduated high school in the United States, and would shortly be attending university.

While there has been a steady stream of books, TV series, and film adaptations of the rescue, the boys themselves have mostly kept out of the limelight. Mongkol Booneiam, known as Mark, said he still lives — and plays football — in a nearby village. "If I have free time then I'd try to go play," he said. — AFP



Coach Ekapol Chantawong (center) of the Thai "Wild Boars" youth football team takes part in a Buddhist alms ceremony outside the Tham Luang Cave.



People walk inside the Tham Luang Cave in Mae Sai district in the northern province of Chiang Rai on July 10, 2023, during an event to mark the five-year anniversary of the Thai "Wild Boars" football team's rescue from inside the flooded cave.

## Pakistani mountaineer races rivals, hunts funds to chase summit record



This picture shows mountaineer Shehroze Kashif training at a gym in Lahore.



This picture shows mountaineer Shehroze Kashif posing for a photo next to his Guinness records certificate during an interview with AFP inside his home in Lahore.



This picture shows mountaineer Shehroze Kashif training at a gym in Lahore.

**P**akistani mountaineer Shehroze Kashif faces sub-zero temperatures and biting winds in his race to scale the world's highest peaks, but his biggest challenge is finding the money. Kashif, 21, aims this year to become the youngest person to climb every peak above 8,000 meters (26,247 feet), all of which are in Asia, with five in Pakistan.

Summitting Everest set him back around \$60,000, and climbing all 14 "super peaks" can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars — funds that are especially difficult to raise in a country gripped by an economic crisis. "My father sold my car and a piece of land... that's how I did Everest," Kashif told AFP from his home in Lahore, the sub-tropical, low-altitude city where he was born.

Only around 50 people are believed to have climbed all 14 super peaks, the youngest being Mingma Gyabu "David" Sherpa of Nepal, who summited them all by age 30. To break this record, Kashif still has three mountains to conquer: China's Shishapangma, and Cho Oyu and Manaslu in Nepal, having to re-climb the latter after a new, higher summit was officially recognized in 2021.

Hot on Kashif's heels is Adriana Brownlee, a 22-year-old British-Spanish mountaineer who is also racing to be the youngest to scale all the eight-thousanders.

Kashif describes Brownlee — the youngest woman to climb the world's second-highest peak, K2 — as "sharing the same stage". But unlike Brownlee, who has climbed 10 eight-thousanders,

Kashif does not have international sponsorship and said he even struggles to get backers in Pakistan. Brownlee will also need to re-summit Manaslu, in what would be her third attempt to scale the peak since first climbing it. "I think she's waiting for me (to do it) actually," Kashif said with a laugh.



This picture shows mountaineer Shehroze Kashif (left) training with coach Shamo Khan at a gym in Lahore.

### Racking up records

Kashif first became interested in climbing aged 11, when most Pakistani boys his age are building up their cricket skills. Instead, he climbed the 3,885-metre Himalayan peak Makra in northern Pakistan. He has racked up a string of records since then, with scarcely enough space in his Twitter bio to list them all. Kashif is the youngest person to climb K2 and the youngest to climb both of the

world's two highest mountains.

He is also the youngest to climb Pakistan's Broad Peak, the world's 12th highest mountain and his first eight-thousander — a feat that earned him the moniker "Broad Boy". "It's not about only climbing the mountains. It's about the energy that you absorb from the moun-

tain," Kashif said. "Every mountain has its own charm. It's own aura of... danger and adventure and happiness."

### Skirting death

With memorial plaques dotting the hills of the eight-thousanders, Kashif is aware of his pursuit's risks. "These guys were here with the same potential, same passion, same enthusiasm, same determination and same tolerance (as me),"

he said. Kashif's most dangerous climb was up the world's ninth-highest peak, Nanga Parbat, in July 2022.

He and his climbing partner Fozal Ali got lost in bad weather after summiting, and soon ran out of oxygen, food and water. "I started hallucinating," Kashif said. "My head was working (but the) rest of my



This picture shows mountaineer Shehroze Kashif displaying his picture on a phone during one of his expeditions, after an interview with AFP inside his home in Lahore.

body was just totally numb." When Kashif woke from a rest, he was surprised to be alive, and determined to survive. After six hours of trekking, the pair made it to one of the mountain's base camps. "The thing that I was most afraid of (is) that I don't want to die without knowing what my body is capable of." — AFP



# Welcome to the Anthropocene, Earth's new chapter

Since 2009, a cloistered band of hard-rock geologists and other scientists have toiled on a mission of great consequence. On Tuesday they will deliver the last of their findings — the location of ground-zero for the Anthropocene, the proposed geological epoch borne of humanity's outsized impact on the planet. In essence, the Anthropocene Working Group was mandated by the high priests of Earth's geological timeline to answer three questions.

The first, roughly, is this: would aliens sifting through Earth's layered rocks and sediment a million years from now discern a human signature distinctive enough to mark a clear geological boundary? If they did, when would it start? Yes, the Working Group concluded, human appetites and activity have evicted the planet — and its inhabitants — from the stability of the Holocene epoch, which began 11,700 years ago as the last ice age ended.

The world is getting uncomfortably hot and its life-support systems are failing. The threshold for the "epoch of humans" first proposed in 2002 by chemistry Nobel Paul Crutzen, they said, should be the mid-20th century.

This is when a sharp surge in greenhouse gas concentration, microplastic pollution, invasive species, radioactive traces from atom bomb testing, and a dozen other markers of our species' growing influence added up to what scientists now call the Great Acceleration. That leaves the question of the "golden spike" — the single lake deposit, coral reef, ice core or other geological repository of evidence that best embodies the Anthropocene. The "winner" will be an-

nounced Tuesday in joint press conferences at the Max Planck Society in Berlin and a meeting of working group scientists in Lille, France.

## A paradigm shift

Presented as recommendations, the fruit of the Working Group's long labors must now be validated by a gauntlet of sceptical, hard-nosed scientists at the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) and, higher up the food chain, the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS). The chances of that happening are slim, according to almost everyone involved.

At one level, the issues under debate are narrow to the point of pedantry — rock experts quibbling over whether the Anthropocene merits inclusion in the International Chronostratigraphic Chart, the planet's official 4.6-billion-year timeline. Some geologists say it doesn't meet the technical criteria, even as they acknowledge a rupture with the past.

At the same time, marking the end of the Holocene and the start of a new epoch would force us to ponder humanity's devastating impact. For the first time in Earth's history, a single species has not only radically changed the planet's morphology, chemistry and biology, but is aware of having done so. Crutzen, who earned a Nobel for identifying the man-made chemicals destroying the protective ozone layer, hoped the concept and reality of the Anthropocene would focus minds on the challenges ahead.

"It could well be a paradigm shift in scientific thinking," he said at a symposium in 2011. A dozen years later, many of the



scientists who look at how the strands of the Earth system intersect agree. "It's the recognition that, 'Oh my God, we have tipping points. Oh my God, the Holocene is the only state that can support us,'" Johan Rockstrom, head of the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, told

AFP. "The paradigm shift is the realization that we're leaving the Holocene and entering the Anthropocene."

## Minefield of resistance

Other scientists, however, remain unconvinced, including powerful gatekeep-

ers lobbying against the Anthropocene being adopted as a formal epoch. "The conditions which brought about glaciation" — a dozen mini-ice ages over the last million years — "haven't changed, so we might expect that the Holocene is simply another interglacial," Phil Gibbard, Secretary of the ICS, told the "Geology Bites" podcast last year. He suggested the planet could continue in that pattern for another 50 million years.

As for the Anthropocene, Gibbard has suggested calling it an "event" covering millennia of human alterations of the environment. In geology, he noted, an event can be anything from a single raindrop pitting a lump of clay to the Great Oxidation Event that transformed Earth's atmosphere some 2.2 billion years ago.

For Jan Zalasiewicz, a journeyman geologist who rose to the challenge of leading the Anthropocene Working Group through a forest of evidence and minefield of resistance for more than a decade, that's not good enough. Failure to formally ratify the concept, he said, would leave the impression that the Holocene conditions that allowed human civilization to flourish are still there.

"Clearly they are not," he told AFP. "I am concerned that if the word 'Anthropocene' continues to mean different things to different people, then it will lose its significance and simply fade away." In the end, Zalasiewicz said, we can only follow the evidence. "Science is basically trying to establish what's real as opposed to what's not," he said. "And the Anthropocene is real." — AFP

## Proof humans reshaped the world? Chickens

When aliens or our distant progeny sift through layers of sediment 500,000 years from now to decode the Earth's past, they will find unusual evidence of the abrupt change that upended life half-a-million years earlier: chicken bones. That is the conclusion of scientists whose findings are offered as proof that rapid expansion of human appetites and activity so radically altered natural systems as to tip Earth into a new geological epoch called the Anthropocene, or the "era of humans".

There will be other telltale clues in mud and rocks of a planetary-scale rupture around the mid-20th century: the sudden rise of CO<sub>2</sub>, methane and other greenhouse gases; radioactive detritus from nuclear bomb tests; omnipresent microplastics; and the spread of invasive species.

But chicken bones could be among the most revealing findings, and tell the story in more ways than one. To begin with, they are a human invention. "The modern meat chicken is unrecognizable compared to its ancestors or wild counterparts," said Carys Bennett, a geologist and lead author of a 2017 study in Royal Society Open Science laying out the evidence for the animal



as a "marker species" of the Anthropocene. "Body size, the shape of the skeleton, bone chemistry and genetics are all distinct." Their very existence, in other words, is evidence of humanity's capacity to hack nature and intervene in natural processes.

## 'Clear signal'

The modern broiler chicken's origins are in the jungles of Southeast Asia, where its forebear, the red junglefowl (*Gallus gallus*), was first domesticated some 8,000 years ago. The species has long been prized for its meat and eggs, but its engineered breeding into the rotund, short-lived creature found in supermarkets the world over started only after World War II.

"It usually takes millions of years for evolution to occur, but here it has taken just decades to produce a new form of animal," Jan Zalasiewicz, an emeritus professor of palaeobiology at the University of Leicester, told AFP. Last year, the official Anthropocene Working Group he chaired for more than a de-

cade determined that the Holocene Epoch — which began 11,700 years ago as the last ice age ended — gave way to the Anthropocene in the mid-20th century. On Tuesday, it will announce which spot on Earth best exemplifies that shift.

Another line of evidence is the omnipresence of broiler chickens: virtually anywhere on Earth there are people, there will also be copious remains of our species' favorite source of animal protein. Today, there are some 33 billion of the flightless birds worldwide at any given time, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The biomass of domesticated chickens is more than three times that of all wild bird species combined.

At least 25 million are culled every day, whether for chicken tikka in the Punjab, yakitori in Japan, poulet yassa in Senegal or McDonald's nuggets everywhere. And while many societies shun the eating of beef or pork, how many cultures in the world do not have chicken on the menu?

"Chickens are a symbol of how our biosphere has changed and is now dominated by human consumption and resource use," said Bennett, formerly a researcher at the University Of Leicester and now an officer at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in Britain. "The enormous number of distinctive chicken bones discarded worldwide will leave a clear signal in the future geological record," she said. — AFP

## How the weight of the world fell on one geologist's shoulders

In 1981, newly minted palaeobiologist Jan Zalasiewicz assumed he was headed for a discreet career retrieving and deciphering fossils from Earth's deep past. For three decades the British scientist was, in his words, an itinerant geologist. But then, curiosity and happenstance thrust him into the middle of a raging debate within science and beyond as to whether human activity and appetites have tilted our planet into a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene.

Zalasiewicz was tapped in 2009 by the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) — guardians of the timescale dividing Earth's history into segments such as the Jurassic and Cretaceous — to chair a working group on the issue. "I was ambushed by the Anthropocene, and then kidnapped without hope of release," he told AFP in an interview.

The working group has already concluded that the geological record shows a clear rupture in the stability of the Holocene epoch that began 11,700 years ago, and that it occurred around the middle of the 20th century. Zalasiewicz pointed to an "embarrassment of riches" of evidence locked in ice cores, sediment and coral skeletons: microplastics, forever chemicals, traces of invasive species, greenhouse gases, and the fallout from nuclear bombs.

## Explosive change

On Tuesday, the Working Group will announce which of nine candidate sites will get the "golden spike" signifying its status as ground zero for the Anthropocene. Zalasiewicz's 15-years-and-counting Anthropocene odyssey was not what

he signed up for. "When I started geology, it was very much an escape from the complications of the world. You learn to live in the past," he said in an interview.

"Plunging into the Anthropocene, I hit all of this messy, complicated human life," he added. "It's a very abrupt change, and it's not a comfortable one." But Zalasiewicz only has himself to blame. Already in the late 1990s, he was intrigued by what human civilization's fossil record might look like, leading to his first book in 2008, "Earth After Us: What Legacy Will Humans Leave in the Rocks?"

This made him an obvious choice to lead the Working Group, which he did until 2020. He is still a voting member.



This handout photograph shows Jan Zalasiewicz, Emeritus Professor of Palaeobiology and the long-time chair of the Anthropocene Working Group, as he poses in his office at the University of Leicester in Leicester, central England. — AFP

## Overwhelming evidence

Two non-geologists invited to join the Working Group — chemistry Nobel winner Paul Crutzen, who coined the term Anthropocene in 2002, and climate scientist Will Steffen, both recently deceased — had long championed that theory. "The geologists were in fact catching up with the Earth system scientists," said Zalasiewicz, now an emeritus professor at the University of Leicester.

Today, Zalasiewicz is clearly worried about whether the Working Group's recommendations will survive the gauntlet of votes required for final validation. He's not optimistic. "There is deep resistance to the idea of the Anthropocene, including from the most influential and powerful stratigraphers," notably the heads of the ICS and above that, the International Union of Geological Science, both of whom have been vocal in their opposition, mostly on technical grounds. — AFP



This handout photograph shows scientists handling a multiple core sampling device for extracting sediments and sludge, in Beppu Bay, southern Japan. — AFP

## Japan sea sludge tells story of human impact on Earth

Beneath the seawater in Japan's Beppu Bay lie layers of seemingly unremarkable sediment and sludge that tell the story of how humans have fundamentally altered the world around them. The site is among those being considered for designation as a "golden spike", a location that offers evidence of a new geological epoch defined by our species: the Anthropocene. The path to agree the new era has been long and controversial, with scientists wrangling for years over whether the Holocene epoch that began 11,700 years ago has really been replaced by a new period defined by human impact on the Earth.

Key to their discussions has been picking a site that clearly documents the way we have changed our environment, from contaminating it with plutonium from nuclear tests, to littering it with microplastics. Twelve sites around the world have been proposed as golden spike locations, including a peatland in Poland, an Australian coral reef, and the basin-like Beppu bay in Japan's southwestern Oita. Michinobu Kuwae, an associate professor at the Ehime Centre of Marine Environmental Studies, has been studying the area for nearly a decade. He began with investigations of how climate change affected fish populations, with layers of deposited fish scales in the bay's sediment offering clues about the past.

It was only more recently he began to consider the location as a potential golden spike, given the many "anthropogenic fingerprints, including man-made chemicals and radionuclides, layered in the bay's sediment." The layers allow scientists to pinpoint "the precise date and level of an Anthropocene-Holocene boundary," he told AFP. "There are the most diverse anthropogenic markers."

That perfect preservation is the result of several unique characteristics, explained Yusuke Yokoyama, a professor at the University of Tokyo's Atmosphere and Ocean Research Institute, who has analyzed core samples from the site. The bay floor dips down quickly from the shoreline, creating a basin that traps material in the water column and "kind of creates a miso soup," he told AFP. Water can flow in, but only moves back out at the surface, and a lack of oxygen means there are no organisms disturbing the sediment or disrupting deposits.

## A 'warning bell' for humanity

"It's like Baumkuchen, the cake, a stack of pancakes, and you can count those pancakes to get the precise age," he added. For a site to be considered a golden spike location, it must meet several conditions, including offering a record of at least the last century, along with specific "anthropogenic signals" like nuclear bomb testing, ecosystem change and industrialization. It also needs to offer a complete archive of the period covered, and markers that allow scientists to identify which layer represents which year. Coral is considered by some to be a good candidate because it grows in layers like a tree trunk and absorbs elements dissolved in water, including signatures from nuclear testing.

But it cannot capture materials that do not dissolve in water, like microplastics. The sediment of Beppu Bay, by contrast, captures everything from agricultural fertilizer run-off to deposits from historic floods recorded in official documentation, as well as fish scales and plastics. The most compelling feature however, according to Kuwae and Yokoyama, are the signatures from a series of nuclear bomb tests carried out across the Pacific ocean from 1946 to 1963.

The tests produced atmospheric radiation that was detectable globally, but also direct signatures that registered in places close to the testing sites. "We can detect both," said Yokoyama. "Because Beppu Bay is located downstream... we can identify the particular signatures of certain tests." Core samples collected from Beppu Bay showed peaks in plutonium that correlated with individual nuclear tests, and matched similar findings in coral in nearby Ishigaki.

Whichever site is chosen as a golden spike, Beppu Bay and other candidate locations are expected to remain important resources for understanding human impact on the Earth. And Kuwae hopes an official designation of the Anthropocene will be a "warning bell" for humanity. "Deterioration of the global environment, including global warming, is rapidly progressing," he said. "We will be in a state where the original safe earth, once lost, can no longer be recovered." — AFP



Lifestyle



Kenya Takahashi, a member of the Meiji University "Oendan", or cheering section, takes part in the hands clapping practice with his team at the campus in Tokyo. - AFP photos



Members of the Kokugakuin University "Oendan" perform during a Tokyo competition between "Oendan" university cheerleading squads in Tokyo.



Taiga Kobayashi, a member of the Meiji University "Oendan", or cheering section, react during a warm-up workout before the hands clapping practice at the campus in Tokyo.

# JAPAN'S MACHO CHEERLEADERS FIGHT TO SAVE A TRADITION

They are drenched in sweat, their hands bloodied from clapping, and their voices hoarse from shouting — meet Japan's predominantly male and unashamedly macho "leadership section" cheerleaders. The cheerleaders are part of a century-old tradition that some fear faces an existential crisis, with fewer students showing an interest in the hard-

to the point of ridiculousness, and that's what makes us so cool," said Taisuke Ono, 21, a member of a squad at Tokyo's Waseda University.

"Even if we're trailing by 10 points and there's almost no chance of a comeback, we somehow manage to convince ourselves we can still win." Squads like Ono's typically perform alongside brass

universities joined forces last year in a campaign to win designation of the tradition as an "intangible cultural property". The label is awarded by Japan's culture minister to activities seen as having unique importance, like calligraphy and traditional sake brewing. Campaigners say the recognition would increase the squads' prestige and encourage fresh recruits, while activities that have obtained the distinction in the past have been awarded government subsidies.

asionally led to full-on skirmishes between swaggering cheerleaders from rival universities.

Those historical behaviors have created persistent "negative perceptions" about the squads, a report by an alumni group said in 2018. But most universities now brook no such violence, and recent decades have seen a change many once thought impossible: women recruits. To-

many hours bashing their hands together to perfect their claps, they can come away with bloodied palms.

And training is supervised by glaring seniors who pepper their teammates with shouts and haranguing, though their stern demeanor gives way to smiles and bows when talking to spectators and visitors. The groups are motivated by the spirit of "annihilate yourself, serve oth-



A member of the Meiji University "Oendan" cheers during a university baseball game at Meiji Jingu Baseball Park in Tokyo.

core art form. And now there is a push for the squads and their counterparts in Japan's traditional "oendan" cheering groups to be registered as part of the country's "intangible" cultural heritage.

The "leadership section" cheerleaders are a formidable sight. Dressed in old-fashioned school-style uniforms, they are a mass of black at college baseball games as they belch out chants, bang taiko drums and thrust their fists in rigid, martial moves. "We give it our all

bands and American-style, mostly women cheerleaders — a triumvirate known as "oendan" or "rooters".

But the men-dominated "leadership sections" have seen their ranks shrink at a pace that far outstrips their counterparts, with around a dozen groups disappearing over 15 years, according to one survey. Pandemic-era bans on shouting and restrictions on crowds only deepened the malaise.

Alarmed by the situation, dozens of

### 'Emperor' and 'slaves'

"We're now at a phase where the culture is about to vanish," said Jun Tochimoto, who has spearheaded the campaign. "At the heart of what these cheerleaders do is the idea that they're training and improving themselves through the art of cheering — that's the mindset we hope will be preserved," he said. The decline began in earnest several decades ago, with potential recruits scared away by macho images and rumors of hazing.

A holdover from Japan's Meiji period (1868-1912) counterculture, the squads are said to have been infused with a military style by students who were demobilized after WWII. A draconian hierarchy prevailed in post-war years, with senior-year students deified as the "emperor" and freshmen roughed up as "slaves," recalled Hiroshi Imazu, a 1970 graduate of Tokyo's Chuo University.

They were sometimes even tasked with battling left-wing students whose activism paralyzed some universities, the former squad member recalled. "We were basically a bunch of students who felt proud that the reputation of our university was on our shoulders," the 76-year-old said. That school pride oc-



Members of the Meiji University "Oendan", or cheering section, play drums during a university baseball game at Meiji Jingu Baseball Park in Tokyo.

day, women dressed in the black uniforms — called "gakuran" — perform alongside male teammates, sometimes as group leaders. "I didn't want to blindly accept social expectations about how women should live... and I wanted to see how far I could go in this male-centric community," Kazuha Nagahara of Tokai University, 22, told AFP.

### 'Anybody can be a star'

Women are "breathing new life" into struggling squads, she said. "I think it's providing a path for their survival." Violence might no longer be acceptable, but asceticism and stamina remain core values for the groups. At Tokyo's Meiji University, junior cheerleaders spend so

ers", said 50-year-old Yasunori Sugaya, a former Meiji squad member who now coaches the group. It is an ethos passed down to current Meiji captain Motomichi Tanaka, 21, and his contemporaries.

At a recent baseball match, he stood to attention throughout a downpour that stopped play, rallying to keep spirits up among fans. "Part of me does fantasize about having a more fun, leisurely campus life," said a chuckling Tanaka. But unlike other sports, where physique and natural talent are a big factor, "anyone who wants to do their best and be cool can be us," he said. "Anybody can be a star... I'm proud of what I do." — AFP



Members of the Rishso University "Oendan", or cheering section, perform during a Tokyo competition between "Oendan" university cheerleading squads in Tokyo.



Members of the Toyo University "Oendan", or cheering section, perform during a Tokyo competition between "Oendan" university cheerleading squads in Tokyo.



A member of the Meiji University "Oendan" cheers during a university baseball game at Meiji Jingu Baseball Park in Tokyo.

## 'Insidious' whips past 'Indy 5' to top North America box office

Sony's horror film "Insidious: The Red Door" scared its way to the top of the North American box office on a slow weekend, taking in an estimated \$32.7 million, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. The dark tale of astral projection and demonic possession, starring and directed by Patrick Wilson, had weak reviews. Still, for the fifth installment of a horror franchise it enjoyed "an excellent opening," said entertainment analyst David A. Gross.

The film, a co-production of Screen Gems, Stage 6 Films and Blumhouse, dethroned Disney's "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," which had logged weaker than expected numbers in its debut last weekend. This fifth "Indy" episode, again starring Harrison Ford as a

whip-cracking archeologist, took in \$26.5 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period, a long way from recouping the film's estimated \$295 million budget.

In third, at \$17 million, was surprise hit "Sound of Freedom," a Christian action thriller from Santa Fe Films and Angel Studios. Jim Caviezel (who once played Jesus) stars in a story based on true-life former US government agent Tim Ballard, who says he has rescued more than 100 children from Colombian sex



traffickers. The film has found a niche audience among Christian conservatives. Critics, however, say "Sound" plays into wild QAnon conspiracy theories about a dark international cabal kidnapping children and harvesting their blood.

While Angel Studios denies that its film warps the truth, Caviezel and Ballard have both embraced some extreme QAnon claims. In fourth spot was Disney/Pixar's family-friendly animation "Elemental," at \$9.6 million. The cross-cultural rom-com (can fire and water ever find happiness?) has done well since a "disastrous opening," according to Variety. And in fifth was "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse," the second installment in Sony's animated take on the web-slinging superhero. It took in \$8 million. Rounding out the top 10 were:

- "Joy Ride" (\$5.9 million)
- "No Hard Feelings" (\$5.3 million)
- "Transformers: Rise of the Beasts" (\$5 million)
- "The Little Mermaid" (\$3.5 million)
- "Ruby Gillman: Teenage Kraken" (\$2.8 million). — AFP

## Iran sentences rapper to six years for backing protests

A prominent Iranian rapper who backed nationwide anti-regime protests last year, has been sentenced to more than six years in prison over charges of "corruption on earth", local media reported Monday. Toomaj Salehi, 32, was arrested in October after expressing support for mass demonstrations triggered by the death in custody of 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, Mahsa Amini. She was arrested for allegedly breaching the country's strict dress code for women.

Salehi was handed a sentence of six years and three months for "corruption on earth", one of the Islamic republic's most serious offences which carries a maximum penalty of death, his lawyer Roza Etemad-Ansari told the Daily Shargh. She said the rapper was acquitted of charges related to "insulting the Supreme Leader", Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and "communicating with hostile governments."

The rapper, who was in solitary con-

finement in Dastgerd prison in central Iran, was moved to the general section of the prison, the lawyer added. Last year's protests saw hundreds of people killed, including dozens of security personnel, and thousands arrested in connection with what officials labeled as "riots" which they said were fomented by foreign countries after Amini's death. Seven men have been executed in protest-related cases involving killing and other violence against security forces. — AFP





## Sports

# Corpuz captures first LPGA victory in dramatic fashion

## Corpuz wins US Women's Open by three strokes

SAN FRANCISCO: American Allisen Corpuz captured her first LPGA victory in dramatic fashion on Sunday, firing a three-under par 69 to win the US Women's Open by three strokes. The 25-year-old from Honolulu finished 72 holes at Pebble Beach on nine-under 279 to defeat England's Charley Hull, who fired a final-round 66, and South Korean Shin Ji-yai, who shot 68. "Unreal. This week has just felt like a dream come true," Corpuz said. "It has been just awesome to be out at Pebble this week." Japan's Nasa Hataoka, the 54-hole leader, finished with a 76 to share fourth on 285 with American Bailey Tardy while Japan's Ayaka Furue and South Korean Kim Hyo-joo shared sixth on 286.

Corpuz had shared a major lead at the Chevron Championship earlier this year before settling for fourth, a hint of the promise she made real at the iconic California seaside course where such legends as Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus have hoisted trophies.

"I've played a little conservatively in the past and just went out there and told myself I had the game to do it today," Corpuz said. "Little nervous at times but pretty comfortable."

A turning point came at the par-3 12th when leader Corpuz blasted out of a bunker and made a 16-foot par putt while Hataoka missed a five-foot par putt moments later to fall two adrift of the American. Hull sank a 30-foot birdie putt at the par-5 16th to pull within two on 6-under with Hataoka

making bogey at 14 to fall back. Corpuz responded moments later by sinking a seven-foot birdie putt at the par-5 14th and when she added another from four feet at 15, she reached 10-under and surged ahead of Hull by four shots.

Corpuz had a bogey at the par-3 17th but still finished as the only player to crack par in all four rounds. "Every few holes I just looked out and said I'm at Pebble Beach, there's not many places that are better than this," Corpuz said. "So really just tried to stay grounded and keep playing my game." Corpuz made a five-foot birdie putt on the opening hole, saved par with a 10-foot putt at the par-5 second, followed with a 12-foot birdie at the third, then missed a six-foot par putt to bogey the fourth after missing the green with her approach.

She sank a birdie putt from just outside 10 feet at the par-3 seventh, missed the green on her approach and took a bogey at the ninth, then answered at 10 with a birdie putt from just inside nine feet. Hull had six birdies, two bogeys and an eagle in her 66, the day's low round. "I just got off to a fast start," Hull said. "I've been so focused and working on my game hard and today it just all clicked." World number 20 Hataoka fell short in her bid to become the third Japanese woman to win a major title. She had runner-up major finishes as the 2018 Women's PGA Championship and the 2021 US Women's Open at The Olympic Club in nearby San Francisco. — AFP



CALIFORNIA: Allisen Corpuz of the United States celebrates with the Harton S Semple Trophy after winning the 78th US Women's Open at Pebble Beach Golf Links on July 9, 2023. — AFP

## Arab Games: Kuwait wins 2 more medals

ALGIERS: Kuwait national team participating in the Arab Games, hosted by Algeria, increased their medals tally Sunday by two medals, (a silver and a bronze) in fencing competition, bringing the number of medals to (three silver and three bronze). The Kuwaiti team secured their place in honorary podiums

on the first day of the fencing competitions, which took place at the Women's Sports Center in Ben Aknoun (Algiers), and was able to shine among a group of Arab stars.

Kuwaiti national team champion, Ali Al-Nassar won the silver medal in the men's individual instant weapon competition. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti champion Ali Fadhel was also able to stand out in the same competition, as he came in third place in the men's individual instant weapon. Thirty-two Kuwaitis, men and women, are competing in the event across six different sports. — KUNA



Kuwaiti champions Ali Al-Nassar and Ali Fadhel

## Straka fires 62, wins PGA John Deere Classic

WASHINGTON: Sepp Straka's bid for a sub-60 final round met a watery grave at the 72nd hole on Sunday but he hung on to win the PGA John Deere Classic. Despite closing with a double bogey, the 30-year-old Austrian fired a PGA career-low nine-under par 62 in the final round to finish 72 holes on 21-under 263 at TPC Deere Run in Silvis, Illinois. That was good enough for a two-stroke victory over Americans Brendon Todd and Alex Smalley, who couldn't overtake Straka down the last holes.

"It was pretty crazy. I'm just pumped about it. It feels awesome," Straka said about his second career PGA title. "The putter was hot and I was able to take advantage of it with some good iron play." Straka was 11-under on the day before finding water at 18 and reaching the clubhouse only two strokes ahead of Todd, who had five holes remaining as he tried to end a four-year win drought.

Todd and Smalley each birdied 14 to pull within one but Todd missed a six-foot birdie putt at 15 and made a three-putt bogey at the par-3 16th to fall two adrift again. Both closed with back-to-back pars to hand Straka hand the triumph. "The 59 was nowhere in my head really," Straka said of his closing holes. "I knew I had a chance but in that situation the only thing that really matters is trying to win the golf tournament."

That seemed in doubt after he found the water on his approach at 18. "It was not a good shot, pulled it," Straka said. "Wind was off to the right but I was just trying to go to the middle of the green, let it feed down to the left toward the hole. Pulled it early and then the wind drug it over to the water." It was unfortunate but that was the first bad shot I hit today so I'll give myself a little bit of slack there. Hit a good putt. Broke a little more than I thought it would." Straka won his only prior PGA title at last year's Honda Classic but lost two other 2022 events in playoffs.

### Impressive for 17 holes

Straka's impressive round began with a birdie putt from just outside five feet at the first hole, followed by a 20-foot eagle putt at the par-5 second. "Ball just stopped short of the bunker where I could have a stance and hit a really nice iron shot in there and made the putt," Straka said of his eagle. After a birdie putt at the fourth from just outside eight feet, Straka landed his approach barely two feet from the hole and birdied the par-4 sixth, then sank a 29-foot birdie putt at the par-3 seventh.

Straka closed the front nine with a 40-foot birdie putt for a 7-under 28 start, his lowest nine-hole score. He reeled off four birdies in a row with a seven-foot birdie putt at 11, another from just inside 14 feet at the par-3 12th, a nine-foot birdie putt at 13 and another from half that distance at 14. Straka was just off the left edge of the hole on a 41-foot birdie putt at 15 and saved par from a greenside bunker at the par-5 17th before the double bogey finish. — AFP



ILLINOIS: Sepp Straka of Austria poses with the trophy after winning the John Deere Classic at TPC Deere Run on July 09, 2023. — AFP

## Sheikh Talal Fahad lauded

KUWAIT: The President of Kuwait Bowling Club, Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, was pleased with Sheikh Talal Al-Fahad taking over as President of the Olympic Council of Asia following elections that were held in Bangkok, Thailand, lately. He said Asian sport will continue to work towards building up on the march that was started by Martyr Fahad Al-Ahmad, who laid the corner stone for this sport monument, which is one of the sports fortes at the world level. Asian sport gained a great status under the presence of OCA. He said Sheikh Talal is able to continue the development of Asian sports due to his experience during his efforts to have Kuwait's best sports status in the Gulf, Arab and Asia.



Sheikh Talal Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah

## PGA board member resigns over 'serious concerns' on LIV deal

WASHINGTON: Randall Stephenson, a former AT&T chief executive, reportedly has resigned his PGA Tour Policy Board position over "serious concerns" about the tour's controversial deal with LIV Golf's Saudi backers. The Washington Post reported on Sunday that it had obtained a copy of his resignation letter dated Saturday with immediate effect.

The 10-member policy board must approve the deal announced last month by PGA Tour commissioner Jay Monahan and Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) governor Yasir Al-Rumayyan for it to be finalized. In his letter, according to the report, Stephenson, a board member since 2012, said the framework agreement of the deal "is not one that I can objectively evaluate...." The merger deal came as a shock to most players after the PGA Tour had banned players who left for LIV from playing and Monahan had appealed to loyalty to keep some players from jumping.

Stephenson said he planned to resign last month but delayed the move after Monahan was taking leave to deal with unspecified medical issues. The PGA Tour announced Friday that Monahan would return to his duties on July 17, after a planned Tuesday hearing by US lawmakers into the PGA-LIV deal where two PGA Tour officials will appear. "I joined this board 12 years ago to serve the best players in the world and to expand the virtues of sportsmanship instilled through the game of golf," Stephenson wrote in the letter.

"I hope, as this board moves forward, it will comprehensively rethink its governance model and keep its options open to evaluate alternative sources of capital beyond the current framework agreement." The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations will hear from Jimmy Dunne, a policy board member who helped negotiate terms of the deal, and Ron Price, the PGA Tour chief operating officer handling duties in Monahan's absence.

LIV Golf and the PGA Tour dropped lawsuits against each other that were set for May 2024 trials and could have revealed many financial details about the PIF and tour. The deal created a for-profit entity to oversee commercial interests for the PGA Tour, LIV Golf and the DP World Tour. Stephenson said he was concerned that the deal "came to fruition without board oversight." The Policy board includes five players, among them four-time major winner Rory McIlroy and US standout Patrick Cantlay. — AFP



LEEDS: England's captain Ben Stokes plays a shot on day two of the third Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia at Headingley cricket ground in Leeds. — AFP

## Things we learned from 3rd Ashes Test

LEEDS: England revived their Ashes hopes with a dramatic three-wicket win over Australia in the fourth Ashes Test at Headingley as they chased down a target of 251 on Sunday. Below AFP Sport looks at three things we learned from a match that left Ben Stokes' men 2-1 down with two to play against world Test champions Australia.

### The need for speed

Mark Wood showed England what they had been missing on his return to the side as the Durham fast bowler regularly topped speeds of 90 mph during a blistering return of 5-34 in Australia's first innings. The quickest England bowler of his generation, Wood's career has been blighted by injuries, notably a succession of ankle problems. But as he demonstrated at Headingley, his blistering speed is a valuable point of difference. Player-of-the-match Wood's clean ball-striking down the order also meant the 33-year-old added priceless runs in both innings, with his uncomplicated but highly effective boundary-hitting helping England win on Sunday with more than a day to spare.

### Woakes proves his worth

It is Chris Woakes' misfortune his Test career as an England pacesman and all-rounder has coincided with that of two outstanding talents in James Anderson and Ben Stokes. Injuries too haven't helped his cause with the result that, since his debut in 2013, Woakes has appeared in just 46 Tests - a relatively small number over a decade given England's volume of red-ball cricket.

But the 34-year-old has rarely complained about his lot and at Headingley - in his first Test in over a year - he again showed his value, particularly in English conditions. With Anderson rested and Ollie Robinson suffering a first-innings back spasm, Woakes returned match figures of 6-141 that would have been even better but for catches dropped off his bowling. And with England faltering at 171-6 in their run chase, Woakes gave Harry Brook (who made 75) much-needed support in a partnership of 59 before hitting the winning runs himself as he finished on 32 not out.

### Marsh ends exile in style

Australia's Mitchell Marsh thought his only role on the tour would be as an understudy to fellow all-rounder Cameron Green. But instead he ended a four-year absence from the Test arena with a remarkable run-a-ball 118 that was the centrepiece of Australia's first-innings 263 where the next highest score was Travis Head's 39. Marsh, the son and brother of two Australia internationals in Geoff and Shaun Marsh, also took two wickets in the match with his lively medium pace to leave the selectors with a real headache heading into a fourth Test at Old Trafford where Green, the man he replaced at Headingley, is expected to be fit. The 31-year-old now boasts superb Test averages against England of over 50 with the bat and under 24 with the ball. But in Leeds he also delivered a nice line of self-deprecating humor, with Marsh joking that, due to his back-up role, he was the "first man to score an Ashes hundred on a UK holiday". — AFP



Sports

# Jackson completes Jamaican sprint double with superb win

## Thomas posts world-leading 21.60 to win US 200m title

**KINGSTON:** World-leading performances from world champion Shericka Jackson and Commonwealth Games record-holder Rasheed Broadbell highlighted Jamaica's strength on the track in Sunday's final day of the national championships. Jackson, the reigning 200m world champion, completed a superb sprint double after she ran what was briefly a 2023 world best of 21.71 seconds (-0.5m/s) to win the 200, her second world lead of the weekend after she ran a personal best 10.65 seconds to win the 100 on Friday.

Jackson took charge of the race off the curve and powered her way home, beating her previous season's best of 21.98 seconds. She passed the 21.86 set by Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Gabby Thomas in the women's 200m semi-finals at the US athletics championships earlier on Sunday. Thomas answered the challenge later on Sunday in the US meet's women's 200 final, blazing to victory in 21.60 to reclaim the year's fastest global time in the event and setting the stage for a showdown with Jackson at next month's World Championships in Budapest. Before Sunday, the old mark for the year in the women's 200 was by St Lucia's Julien Alfred at 21.91.

Shelly Ann Fraser Pryce, three-time Olympic gold medal winner, ran a season-best 22.26 seconds, beating the 22.39 seconds she ran in Saturday's semi-finals, while Lanae-tava Thomas was third in 22.55. Broadbell produced a personal best and world-leading 12.94 seconds (0.7m/s) to win the 110m hurdles in a close contest with Olympic champion Hansle Parchment. Broadbell took over the world lead from American Cordell Tinch's 12.96 seconds and broke his previous personal best of 12.99 set last year. Parchment was second with 13.12 seconds and Orlando Bennett third in 13.19, both season-best runs.

Andrew Hudson retained his men's 200m title, running a season-best 20.11 seconds (-0.2m/s), beating Rasheed Dwyer- 20.26 seconds and Tyquendo Tracey was third with a season's best 20.48 seconds. Yohan Blake, the second fastest man over the distance of all time, was fourth in 20.51 seconds and will miss the World Championships. Olympic Games bronze medalist Megan Tapper produced a superb display of hurdling as she got off to a flying start and held off NCAA champion Ackera Nugent.

Tapper who had run a life time best 12.44 seconds in Saturday's semi-finals, won with 12.64 seconds (-1.9m/s), Nugent clocked 12.67 seconds and former World Champion Danielle Williams grabbed the third spot at 12.82. World leader 18-year-old Jaydon Hibbert retained his men's triple jump title with a mark of 17.68m (1.4m/s). Jordan Scott was second with a wind-aided 16.73m (3.0m/s) with Ryan Brown third with a wind-aided 16.03m (2.5m/s). Hibbert, the NCAA indoor and outdoor champion, also had a wind-aided 17.65m jump (3.2m/s).

Sean Bailey won a highly anticipated battle with Antonio Watson to take his second national men's 400m title, running 44.48 seconds, just off his personal best 44.43 set earlier this season. Watson lowered his personal best for the second time in just over a month, clocking 44.54 seconds to take second place with Jevaughn Powell third in 45.19. Nickesha Pryce won her first women's title as she held off hard-charging Janieve Russell, the 400m hurdles champion, to win in a new personal best 50.21 seconds.

Russell also lowered her personal best to 50.76 seconds while last year's cham-



Jamaica's Shericka Jackson

Champion, Candice McLeod, was third in 51.01. Rajay Hamilton won his first national title, winning the men's 800m in 1:47.28 seconds, beating last year's champion and national record holder Navasky Anderson's 1:47.67. Natoya Goule-Toppin won

her ninth national championship, clocking 1:58.89 to win the 800 meters, finishing comfortably ahead of Adelle Tracey who was second in a season's best 2:01.11 seconds and Jessica McLean was third in 2:05.76 seconds. — AFP

## In-form Australia in pursuit of home World Cup crown

**SYDNEY:** Australia have never progressed past the quarter-finals at seven Women's World Cups but with Sam Kerr leading an in-form team in front of their home fans they could go all the way this time. The Matildas have been consistent performers on the international stage, qualifying for the World Cup repeatedly since 1995 and reaching the last eight three times. They fell in the last 16 to Norway at the 2019 World Cup after a penalty shootout but head into this month's showpiece, co-hosted with New Zealand, in ominous form.

The Australians beat Spain early in the year before stunning European champions England 2-0 away in April, ending the Lionesses' 30-game unbeaten run. With Chelsea striker Kerr one of the best in the business, Australia are among the favorites to win the tournament, but coach Tony Gus-

tavsson is preaching humility. "I've always believed in this team, players who are this loyal and committed," said the Swede, who was appointed in 2020. "But I think it's very important we don't get carried away now. We need to stay very, very humble. "We need to stay in that boring grey area, middle ground to stay grounded and humble — but we know that on any given day we might not have the best team, but we can beat the best team."

### Home pressure

If Australia are to lift the World Cup they will need their 29-year-old skipper Kerr firing. Australia's all-time leading scorer is set to be the face of the tournament. One of the world's best women players, the unassuming Kerr admitted a home World Cup brought extra pressure — but also opportunity. "It's going to be the biggest honor in the world to represent your country at a home World Cup in front of your family and friends," said Kerr.

"We hope this team is remembered forever and we represent Australia in the best way possible and show that Australia can be a real footballing country." But like Gustavsson, she insisted the focus was one game at a time, starting with their Group B clash

against Ireland on July 20 in Sydney in the second game of the tournament. "Ireland are a bloody good team. It's about taking care of one game at a time, you can lose games when you look too far ahead and that was one of the learning curves from the last World Cup," Kerr warned. Nigeria and Canada are also in what looks a tough group.

### Array of talent

Introduced to Australia by British migrants in the late 19th century, football has long battled for attention in a crowded sporting landscape of rugby league, rugby union, Australian Rules and cricket. But football has rapidly gained prominence thanks to women like Kerr who helped drive change with a minimum wage now in place in the country's league and women players treated as true professionals. While Kerr will grab the spotlight, Gustavsson has a wide pool of talent. Veteran defender Clare Polkinghorne and Arsenal's attacking fullback Steph Catley bring experience with more than 100 caps each. Brisbane Roar midfielder Katrina Gorry, Arsenal forward Caitlin Foord and the Real Madrid winger Hayley Raso are also expected to be among the first names on the teamsheet. — AFP

## Barcelona's Oshoala leads WCup charge for ever-present Nigeria

**BARCELONA:** Sporting a pair of sunglasses, Asisat Oshoala celebrated Barcelona's UEFA Champions League triumph with her team-mates in early June, but Nigeria was already on her mind. Standing on the balcony of the historic palace in Placa de Sant Jaume in the city's Gothic neighborhood before several thousand jubilant fans, Oshoala was handed the microphone. "Visca Barca and Visca Nigeria," the 28-year-old forward said, swapping in her homeland for "Catalunya", as the refrain usually goes.

Ruled out with a hamstring injury, Oshoala could not play any part in Barcelona's rollercoaster 3-2 win over Wolfsburg that saw them clinch their second Champions League trophy. However, she will be back to compete later this month at the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand. Nigeria are the only African team to feature in every edition of the tournament since it began in 1991, but the Super Falcons have never made it beyond the quarter-finals.

If that is to change, a lot will depend on five-time African women's player of the year Oshoala. "When you have Oshoala, you have a chance against any team," said Nigeria's American coach Randy Waldrum, whose side must first negotiate a difficult group featuring Australia, Olympic gold medalists Canada and the Republic of Ireland. "She puts a lot of pressure on herself because she loves Nigeria and she wants Nigeria to be successful on the world stage."

### One of the best

Oshoala defied her parents as a youngster, choosing to drop out of school and focus on playing football full-time. It paid off spectacularly. In 2014 she was made a Member of the Order of the Niger by the country's then-president Goodluck Jonathan, a title which she proudly carries in her name on her social media accounts. Barely out of her teenage years, Liverpool signed her in 2015 and she became the first African to play in the English Women's Super League. "We beat a number of top American and European clubs to Asisat's signature," said Liverpool coach Matt Beard. "Asisat is one of the best young players in the world." — AFP



Barcelona's Nigerian forward Asisat Oshoala

## England's Stanway ready to take World Cup by storm

**BURTON UPON TRENT:** Georgia Stanway became a national hero for her role in England women's Euro 2022 triumph but believes she is all the better for a move away from her homeland heading into the World Cup later this month. Just four days after defeating many of her club teammates in front of 87,000 at Wembley as England beat Germany 2-1, Stanway jetted out accompanied only by four suitcases for a new life with Bayern Munich.

The 24-year-old's German may still not be up to standard, but on the pitch she has thrived, helping Bayern to the Frauen-Bundesliga title and the quarter-finals of last season's Champions League. Stanway is not the only member of the Lionesses squad that has spread her wings to learn new ways on the continent. Lucy Bronze and Keira Walsh both won the Champions League in their first season with Barcelona. And she believes that will only make England stronger as they aim to be crowned world champions for the first time.

"You kind of develop as an individual. Me going to Germany I've developed so much on and off the pitch," said Stanway. "On the pitch I've got so much more responsibility. I have like a leadership role which I never expected to happen in such a short space of time. "In terms of the way I am as a

person I'm just so much more open. I went to a country where no one knew who I was and I'd never met anyone. I could be whoever I wanted to be and no one was going to judge me for that. I think that's so important in a football environment to just be you."

Stanway's versatility has seen her used in various roles by England boss Sarina Wiegman, but she is determined to maintain her standards so she is no longer shifted out of her preferred role alongside Walsh in central midfield. "I've been consistent in my performances in the position I'm playing in which I've been able to make my own and that only helps me when I come into his environment," she added. "I need to play well in my midfield position because I don't want to go anywhere else."

### 'Turning point'

Stanway's blistering strike that won a tense Euro 2022 quarter-final in extra-time 12 months ago shot her to fame. For much of that evening in Brighton, England chased Spanish shadows and trailed until Ella Toone levelled six minutes from time. Stanway then fired into the top corner from outside the box to complete the comeback in what she sees as a seminal moment in the history of the Lionesses after so many near misses at



England's midfielder Georgia Stanway

previous major tournaments.

"Not only because I scored it. If anyone else had scored it I would think it was a really turning point for the Lionesses," said the former Manchester City midfielder. "We'd gone 1-0 down, Spain basically had the whole of the football the whole game and we found a way to win." Next came a demolition of Sweden in the semi-finals before extra-time was needed once more to get the better of Stanway's foes turned friends Germany.

The two sides could well meet

again in the quarter-finals at the World Cup if all goes to plan down under. But Stanway is not planning on dishing out any insider information to Wiegman on her club teammates, even if she might ignore them for a few days. "To be fair Sarina probably knows everything already. She probably knows more than me. She's a genius that way. "I think we could meet them in the quarters if things go to plan. That could be interesting. I'll probably have to stay off my phone that week." — 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
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134

Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

## Change of Name

I, **Safdar Faruq Ahmed**, holder of Indian Passport No. W778014, having permanent address at PO Aarthi Shriwardhan Dist-Raigad, Maharashtra, India, Pin code 402110, residing in Kuwait at present hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: **Safdar Faruq Ahmed** and surname: **Khamkar**.

**Thiru L. Mukilarasan** (Hindu), Son of Thiru B. Lingesan, born on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1987 (District of Birth: Chennai), residing at No. 7, New No. 10, R O B, 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Halls Garden, Royapettah, Chennai- 600014, has converted to Islam with the name of **L. Abdul Rahman** on 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2023. **L. Mukilarasan.** (C#3827) 11/07/2023

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## Medvedev secures quarter-final

Rybakina books last-8, rival quits in tears; Lehecka retires with injury



WIMBLEDON: Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia reacts as she plays against Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina (inset) during their women's singles tennis match on the eighth day of the 2023 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon on July 10, 2023. — AFP

**LONDON:** World number three Daniil Medvedev reached his first Wimbledon quarter-final on Monday when Czech opponent Jiri Lehecka retired with an injury. Medvedev was 6-4, 6-2 ahead when his 37th-ranked opponent, who had needed a medical timeout for a right foot injury, retired from their Court One clash. Former US Open winner Medvedev will face either Stefanos Tsitsipas, the Greek world number five, or unseeded Christopher Eubanks of the United States for a place in the semi-finals.

"I saw that his movement was restricted but I didn't see that it was causing any real trouble," said Medvedev. "But when I saw that he was retiring, I saw that it was different. I had no choice but to keep battling until the last point. I feel sorry for Jiri. Hopefully he'll recover and play at many more Grand Slams."

Meanwhile, defending champion Elena Rybakina made the Wimbledon quarter-finals on Monday after opponent Beatriz Haddad Maia quit in tears with injury after just five games. Rybakina was 3-1 up when Brazilian world number 13 Haddad Maia took a medical timeout on Centre Court to treat a lower back injury. She limped back onto the court but was reduced to walking pace and was in tears as she saw out the fifth game before retiring.

"It's never easy to finish a match like this. I hope it is nothing really serious, it is really unlucky for Beatriz," said Rybakina. "Hopefully she is going to get

better and I am just happy to play another round." She added: "I was feeling the ball really well even though it was really windy today." World number three Rybakina will face either two-time champion Petra Kvitova or 2022 runner-up Ons Jabeur for a place in the semi-finals.

### Swiatek, Svitolina win

Iga Swiatek saved two match points while Elina Svitolina triumphed in a stormy, politically-charged duel with Victoria Azarenka to set up a Wimbledon quarter-final showdown on Sunday as Novak Djokovic was defeated by a night-time curfew. World number one Swiatek beat Olympic champion Belinda Bencic 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 on Centre Court. Over on Court One, Ukraine's Svitolina came from a set and break down to defeat Belarusian rival Azarenka 2-6, 6-4, 7-6 (11/9).

Djokovic took a two sets lead over Hubert Hurkacz in their last 16 clash when play was halted ahead of a locally agreed 11pm night-time curfew. Djokovic, playing his 100th match at the tournament, was 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (8/6) ahead against the Pole. The pair will resume on Monday with the winner to face Andrey Rublev for a place in the semi-finals. Defending champion Djokovic is chasing a record-equalling eighth title at the All England Club and 24th career Grand Slam crown.

Swiatek, the reigning US Open and French Open champion, saved two match points in the 12th game of the second set before going on to book a place in the quarter-finals for the first time. Four-time major winner Swiatek, 22, said she felt was able to play without fear when facing a shock exit. "It's actually a little bit easier because on the other hand you feel like she's leading anyway so you play those shots more fearlessly because you know you have nothing to lose."

Svitolina refused to shake the hand of Azarenka in protest at the Belarus government's support of Russia over the war in Ukraine. It has become a common feature but that didn't prevent fans from this time booing Azarenka. "It wasn't fair. It is what it is. What can I do?" said Azarenka. "I haven't done anything wrong, but I can't control the crowd. I'm not sure that a lot of people were understanding what's happening." Svitolina believes the booing could be stopped if tennis authorities issue a statement explaining the position of Ukraine players.

### 'Second happiest moment'

"It was like this for me in Paris at the French Open. It was also unfair," said Svitolina. Despite the controversy, Svitolina described victory as one of her greatest moments. "I think after giving birth to our daughter this is the second-happiest moment in my

life," said Svitolina, who is married to French tennis star Gael Monfils.

Meanwhile, Mirra Andreieva's fairytale season continued as the 16-year-old Russian reached the fourth round, defeating 22nd-seeded compatriot Anastasia Potapova 6-2, 7-5. "Even if I wanted to show my emotions I couldn't because I was out of breath on every point," said Andreieva, who came through qualifying and is making her tournament debut. The teenager had to battle hard in the second set, coming back from 1-4 down before squandering seven break points in the ninth game. But she held her nerve to break Potapova in the 11th game before securing victory when her opponent buried an overhead into the net.

Andreieva arrived at Wimbledon having made a run to the third round at the French Open, also out of qualifying, and will shoot up the rankings after Wimbledon, her first grass-court event on the main tour. Rublev held his nerve to beat Russian-born Kazakh 23rd seed Alexander Bublik 7-5, 6-3, 6-7 (6/8), 6-7 (5/7), 6-4. The seventh seed has now completed the full set of quarter-finals at the majors. He did not drop serve against Bublik, who had defeated him in the Halle grass-court final on the eve of Wimbledon. Rublev fired 21 aces to Bublik's 39 but could have wrapped up the tie when he had two match points in the fourth set. — AFP

## Vingegaard holds Tour lead; Woods climbs to victory

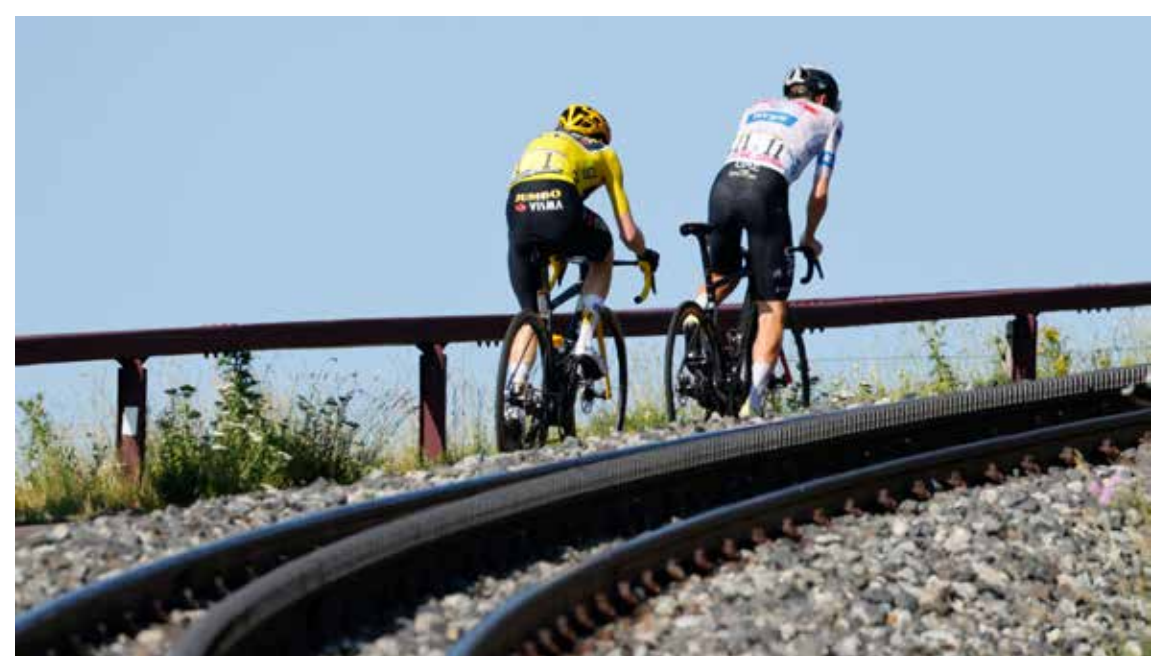
**ORCINES:** Defending champion Jonas Vingegaard held on to the Tour de France overall lead on Sunday ahead of the first rest day as Canada's Michael Woods took a prestigious stage win on the Puy de Dome volcano. France's Pierre Latour crossed 28 seconds behind Woods with Slovenian Matej Mohoric a further seven seconds adrift as the fight between the favorites played out much further down the steep slopes. Two-time Tour winner Tadej Pogacar launched an attack from 600m but defending champion Vingegaard held his cool and followed the Slovenian over the summit finish line just seconds behind.

Two fancied British riders—former Vuelta champion Simon Yates and up-and-coming Ineos star Tom Pidcock—were a further 43sec behind Vingegaard. Vingegaard leads the race ahead of Monday's rest day by 17 seconds, losing eight seconds to Pogacar, but the expected fireworks never materialized on a

hot July day. Woods was surprised with his win after managing to get into the day's escape which led by 16 minutes on the tough slopes where no fans were allowed.

"Because there were no fans at the end it was almost like Covid-period climbing," said Woods. "Up to that point it has been deafening," said the 36-year-old who overtook American Matteo Jorgenson in the home straight. Jorgenson of Movistar had been stung on the way to the dormant volcano and sought medical assistance after a wasp got inside his helmet. The world heritage site in central France provides quite a spectacle and experience in itself. "You can see the volcano from way away, that was really cool," said Woods. "This was my career goal and today was one of the hardest races you could possibly do."

Pogacar was a full 8min 19sec slower than Woods after the 182km stage nine as he finished first from the main contenders after his trademark late burst. "It was a small victory," said Pogacar, who lost ground to the champion on stage four, but has gained time back twice now. "I was a bit worried because everyone was talking about how hard the climb was, but in fact it didn't feel so steep." "I have to say I really enjoyed it," added Pogacar. Vingegaard revealed his team had held back. — AFP



LE PUY: UAE Team Emirates' Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar (right) wearing the best young rider's white jersey cycles ahead of Jumbo-Visma's Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard in the ascent of the Puy de Dome in the final kilometers of the 9th stage of the 110th edition of the Tour de France cycling race. — AFP