

Polestar 2
Why wait to go electric

\$10,000 trade-in support



3 Athletes turn to powerlifting as popularity grows in Kuwait



8 UN: 165m people fell into poverty in 3 years of crisis



13 Afghan village potters keep centuries-old tradition alive



16 Unseeded Vondrousova stuns Jabeur to win Wimbledon title



Record heatwaves sweep world

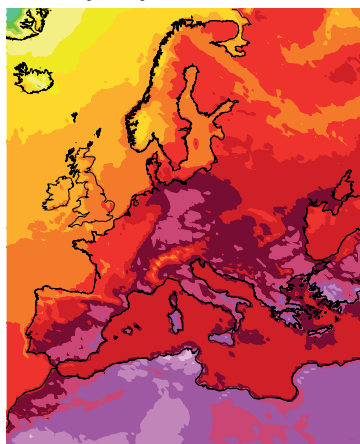
Scientists insist global warming linked to fossil fuels behind rising temperatures

Heatwave in Europe and around the Mediterranean

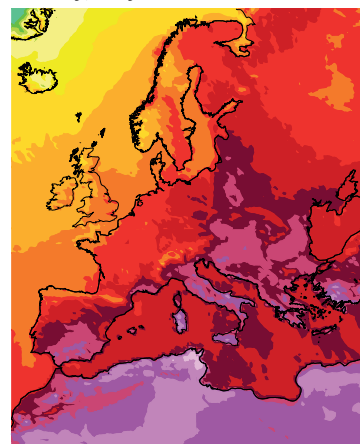
Temperature forecasts at 2 metres above the surface, 1200 GMT, in °C



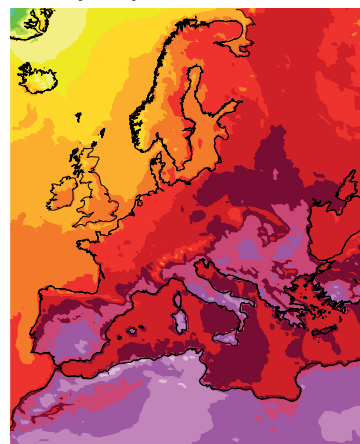
Saturday, July 15



Sunday, July 16



Monday, July 17



Source: ECMWF (forecast as of July 14, 0000 GMT)

AFP

ROME: Record heat is forecast around the world from the United States, where tens of millions are battling dangerously high temperatures, to Europe and Japan, in the latest example of the threat from global warming. In Kuwait, meteorologist Issa Ramadan said "the increase in temperature over the past year has been significant". "It is expected that from the middle of the month until August 20 there will be a noticeable rise in temperatures that may reach and even exceed 50C in the shade," he told AFP.

Italy faces weekend predictions of historic highs with the health ministry issuing a red alert for 16 cities including Rome, Bologna and Florence. The met center warned Italians to prepare for "the most intense heatwave of the summer and also one of the most intense of all time". The thermometer is likely to hit 40 degrees Celsius in Rome by Monday and even 43C on Tuesday, smashing the record of 40.5C set in Aug 2007. The islands of Sicily and Sardinia could wilt under temperatures as high as 48C, the European Space Agency warned — "potentially the hottest temperatures ever recorded in Europe".

Greece is also roasting. "Parts of the country could see highs as much as 44C on Saturday," according to the national weather service EMY. The

central city of Thebes sweated under 44.2C on Friday. The Acropolis, Athens's top tourist attraction, will on Sunday close during the hottest hours for the third day running.

In France, high temperatures and resulting drought are posing a threat to the farming industry, earning Agriculture Minister Marc Fesneau criticism from climatologists on Saturday for having brushed aside conditions as "normal enough for summer". June was the second-hottest on record in France, according to the national weather agency, and several areas of the country have been under a heatwave alert since Tuesday. There is little reprieve ahead for Spain, as its meteorological agency warned Saturday that a new heatwave Monday through Wednesday will bring temperatures above 40C to the Canary Islands and the southern Andalusia region.

Parts of eastern Japan are also expected to reach 38 to 39C on Sunday and Monday, with the meteorological agency warning temperatures could hit previous records. Meanwhile the northern city of Akita saw more rain in half a day than is typical for the whole month of July, Japan's national broadcaster NHK reported. The downpours also triggered at

Continued on Page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

Biometrics still being taken

KUWAIT: The interior ministry announced biometrics scans of citizens, GCC nationals and expatriates are still being taken at designated centers from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm, noting new centers will be opened in some malls where people can have their biometric scans done. Travelers are not required to have their biometric scans taken upon departure and can wait until their return to have their biometrics scanned, the ministry explained. It said citizens and expats can book an appointment for the biometrics scan through the Meta application, while GCC nationals can get an appointment through the ministry website.

New test to hire doctors

KUWAIT: The health ministry announced adding a new test that doctors and medical practitioners must pass before practicing medicine in Kuwait, which includes a unified e-test, personal interview and practical test. Applicants can take the test online starting Sunday, the ministry said, noting that it can also be taken outside Kuwait. The test is an "extension of the proficiency assessment test" that is currently taken before hiring doctors and technicians, the ministry explained in a statement on Saturday. The test is for certain medical professions in the first stage, the ministry noted, adding it will be applied to remaining specializations gradually.

Rice completes record transfer

LONDON: Declan Rice became the most expensive British player in history on Saturday as Arsenal signed the England midfielder from West Ham for a reported £105 million (\$137.5 million). Rice's fee surpassed the previous record £100 million that Manchester City paid Aston Villa for Jack Grealish in 2021 as Arsenal continue their spending spree in a bid to challenge for the Premier League title next season. Neither club officially announced the fee, but West Ham said they would receive a record transfer fee between two British clubs for Rice, 24. — AFP



Declan Rice

UAE and India vow 'successful' climate summit

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates and India vowed on Saturday to make this year's COP28 conference in Dubai a success, as Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a visit to the Gulf state. The oil-rich UAE will host the COP28 United Nations climate talks in November and December, as world nations remain far apart on means to reduce fossil fuels and reduce global warming.

"The UAE and India are united in their determi-

nation to ensure the successful outcome of COP28 as an inclusive and action-oriented conference," read a statement following talks in Abu Dhabi between Emirati President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Modi. The two leaders said they were "committed to enhance cooperation on climate ambition, decarbonization and clean energy, and work together to have tangible and meaningful outcomes" at the conference, it added.

With global temperatures hitting record highs last week and countries buffeted by floods, storms and crop-withering heatwaves, the world remains far off track to meet its climate goals. Emirati oil executive Sultan Al-Jaber, who will head up the COP28 talks, has said he expects fossil fuels to continue to play a role, albeit reduced and with the use of often

Continued on Page 6



ABU DHABI: UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan welcomes Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during an official reception at Qasr Al Watan on July 15, 2023. — AFP

India launches mission to land on the Moon

SRIHARIKOTA, India: India launched a rocket on Friday carrying an unmanned spacecraft to land on the Moon, its second attempt to do so as its cut-price space program seeks to reach new heights. The heavyweight LVM3-M4 rocket lifted off from Sriharikota in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh carrying the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft, as thousands of enthusiasts clapped and cheered.

"Chandrayaan-3... has begun its journey to the Moon. Health of the spacecraft is normal," the Indian Space Re-

search Organization (ISRO) said on Twitter. The world's most populous nation has a comparatively low-budget aerospace program that is rapidly closing in on the milestones set by global space powers. Only Russia, the United States and China have previously achieved a controlled landing on the lunar surface.

India's last attempt to do so ended in failure four years ago, when ground control lost contact moments before landing. "Chandrayaan-3 scripts a new chapter in India's space odyssey," Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted from France, where he was the guest of honor at the Bastille Day parade in Paris. "It soars high, elevating the dreams and ambitions of every Indian."

Continued on Page 6



SRIHARIKOTA, India: People wave Indian flags as an Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) rocket carrying the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft lifts off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre on July 14, 2023. — AFP

Caffeine-heavy viral drink raises concerns for kids

WASHINGTON: With its extremely high levels of caffeine, a hip new soft drink is raising fears in the United States that it might be dangerous for children, who have been snapping up the beverage since it was launched by famous YouTube personalities. Prime was created in 2022 by American Logan Paul and Briton KSI, two influential YouTubers whose wacky — and sometimes controversial — videos are devoured by child-heavy audiences.

A first drink, Prime Hydration, did not contain caffeine. But this year, a second line was launched: Prime Energy. A single can contains 200 milligrams

of caffeine — far more than the 30 milligrams in a can of Coca-Cola, for example, or the 80 milligrams in a can of Red Bull. A launch video showed the two internet stars playing video games and table tennis, very slowly and without enthusiasm at first, then frantically after drinking the beverage.

Since then, many TikTok videos have featured children proudly brandishing the famous bottles, set to a musical background proclaiming "We got Prime, boys!" However, medical experts warn about the risks of younger children consuming caffeine. Children under the age of twelve should not consume the chemical at all, according to the American Academy for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP).

And between the ages of 12 and 18, a limit of 100 milligrams per day is recommended — or half a can of Prime Energy. In addition to restlessness, anxiety and headaches, too much caffeine can cause a child to vomit or to suffer from high blood pressure

Continued on Page 6



AUSTIN: Prime energy drinks are displayed for sale on shelves at a Walmart Supercenter on July 10, 2023. — AFP



9 780202 223841

Experts weigh in on why some fear death, how to overcome it

'Death symbolizes the greatest unknown for humans'

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: The concept of death has captivated and perplexed individuals across cultures ever since humans existed. People's attachment to life and cultural influence shape their perception and understanding of mortality, experts say.

One of the primary reasons behind people's fear of death is because it is rooted in the unknown nature of what lies beyond. "I believe the topic of death carries a sense of mystery for man," sociology expert Dalal Al-Balloul told Kuwait Times.

Similarly, psychology expert Yosef Al-Hasany said: "An essential part of human nature is the search for safety and familiarity and the fear of the unknown or unfamiliar. Death symbolizes the greatest unknown for humans."

Death represents a distinct threshold between life and an ambiguous realm, provoking uneasiness, because humans naturally cling to what is familiar and comprehensible, making the concept of mortality an enigma that provokes fear and uncertainty. As Psychology expert Ali Tareh explained: "Fear of death is partly due to the mysterious and unknown nature of death, which some consider as the end of existence and entry into the unknown."

Attachment to life

Another contributing factor to the fear of death lies within our deeply ingrained attachment to life. "Someone who has built a great kingdom in this world and is attached to their possessions does not want to leave all of that behind," sociology expert Jamil Al-Mari said.

Life brings with it a multitude of experiences, relationships and aspirations that we hold dear. The thought of leaving behind our loved ones, unfulfilled dreams and unfinished business can raise our fear of the inevitable end. This attachment reinforces our perception of death as a cruel and tragic separation from all that we hold dear.

Cultural, religious beliefs

According to Tareh, culture and religion also contribute significantly to people's fear of death. "People's perspectives and attitudes towards death are greatly influenced by their beliefs and social values surrounding them, which contribute to people's fear of discussing death in many ways," he said.

Hasany affirmed: "We notice an exaggeration of fear surrounding the idea of death and intimidation when discussing moments of death. You find common stories about a person suffering in their last



Dr. Jamil Al-Mari



Yosef Al-Hasany



Ali Tareh



Dalal Al-Balloul

hours of life from pain, another person choking multiple times before their death because they were a bad person, and another person screaming in intense pain before their death. Thus, death has become deeply associated with pain, illness and horror."

Mari also elaborated on society's implication and culture's influence on the way individuals react towards death. "What is commonly held in society is that death is considered frightening, and thus people are afraid of it," he said.

Overcoming fear

According to Balloul, educating oneself about death can mitigate its frightening uncertainty. "The knowledgeable human being should treat the idea of death as an educational topic and engage in the process of familiarizing oneself with this idea, despite its difficulty and heavy emotions." Likewise, Tareh said: "Encouraging open dialogue and engaging in meaningful discussions can help alleviate the fear and suffocation associated with this sensitive topic."

Users urged to check roaming fees and rules

KUWAIT: Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority asked consumers to check the roaming fees of service providers and the regulatory rules of them before travelling to avoid payment of additional fees. Acting Director of competition and operators affairs Khalid Al-Qarawi spoke about the importance of the communication between the consumer and service provider (Communications Companies), before activating the roaming service to make sure about the service cost and service options, choose the suitable package or stop the data roaming service to avoid unexpected additional fees.

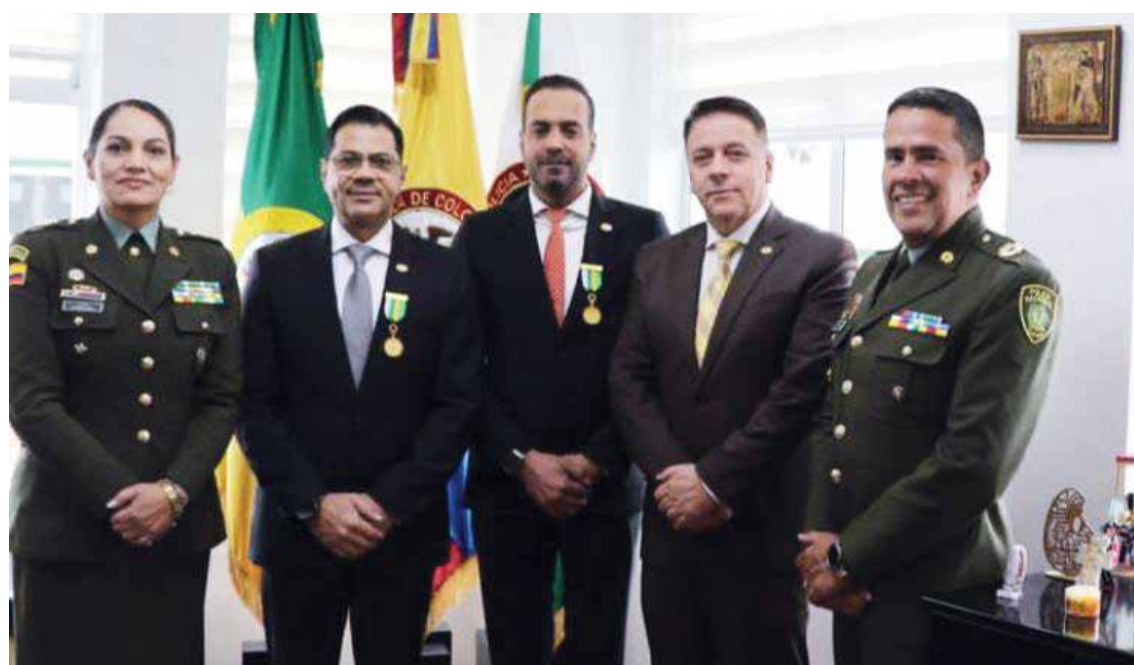
Qarawi said the Authority received complaints from consumers after paying additional fees for the roaming service because of activating the service before checking fees of the provider and the rules that regulate this service between providing companies and consumers. — KUNA

Colombia honors Kuwaiti policemen with gold medals

KUWAIT: Colombian Interior Ministry in the capital Bogota decorated Kuwaiti officers, Brigadiers Khalid Al-Najjar and Tariq Al-Sidani with the National Service Medal of the golden grade for works related to police service in the field of International Sport.

Brigadier Al-Najjar is Assistant Secretary General of the International police sports union, while Al-Sadani is Executive Director for Public Relations and Marketing at the union.

Al-Sadani told KUNA that this "decoration comes on the sidelines of the opening of the International Police Sports Union (IPSU) office for Latin America in Bogota." He said Kuwait political leadership is keen on advancing police sport and activate its activities and programs in order to strengthen the role of policemen and their contribution to society development. He said the International Union under the Chairmanship of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and his con-



tinued support and interest in police sports union activities at various levels.

First Deputy Premier, Defence Minister Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said the honor-

ing was on the occasion of IPSU cooperation with Colombia's police union over 15 years, in addition to helping Colombia organize the International Police Sports Games in the capital Bogota.



Military officials hold flags at the US change of command ceremony.



Kuwaiti and US officials are seen at the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Brigadier General Fahad Al-Otaibi (left), Kuwaiti Military Cooperation Office Director, honors Col Martin Wohlgenuth.

US Army assigns new commander for Kuwait brigade

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: After a year as Commander of Area Support Group - Kuwait, Col Martin Wohlgenuth departs from his post and the country back to the United States. Taking over command of the brigade is Col Daniel Ensen, who will lead the unit for the next year. "Today, we recognize Area Support Group - Kuwait, a flexible and agile formation that provides world-class support to CENTCOM and ARCENT, and two outstanding officers and commanders, Col Wohlgenuth and Col Ensen," Lt Gen Patrick Frank said at the change of command ceremony that took place at Camp Arifjan.

"Marty took command a year ago, and it has been a busy year focused on people, partners, and innovation. He modernized the organization, readying ASG-Kuwait to support contingency operations, providing exceptional support to forces in contact, and served as an extraordinary advocate for US and Kuwaiti bilateral relations," he said.

Regarding the new command, Frank said Ensen was assigned due to his experience and ability. "Daniel is the perfect officer for this tough job. As a former observer/controller-trainer at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, he is a skilled trainer. As a former SFAB commander, he is an expert on building partnerships. He has been deployed multiple times to and through Kuwait, and has experience in CENTCOM partner exercises including Bright Star. And as an armor officer, he has experience in MIA2K, the centerpiece of Kuwaiti land power," he said.

On the Kuwait-US bilateral relationship, Frank



Col Daniel Ensen



Col Martin Wohlgenuth gives a speech.

noted they have a strong relationship, which assists them greatly to have a stable relationship across the region "with the equipment Kuwait helped us with and the location for great training for US forces". "Recently, I went with Gen Mohammed Al-Dhafiri, the Commander of the Kuwaiti Land Force, to see both our combat units, with Kuwaiti and American tanks side by side conducting operations. Kuwait military has very capable staff officers and exceptional information," he stated.

Wohlgenuth thanked everyone for their efforts and time, including American servicemembers in Kuwait, other country partners in the coalition against ISIS, and especially Kuwait's ministries of defense and interior. "My experience in Kuwait was amazing. I will miss the people and the food; I was invited to diwanias and about 30 weddings since I have been in Kuwait. When people open their homes and families, it builds connections. They go beyond uniforms and jobs, because we are friends — we are closer than brothers and sisters," he said.

On behalf of the Kuwait military, Brig Gen Fahad Al-Otaibi, Kuwaiti Military Cooperation Office Director, said: "I have been very happy to work with Col Martin during the last year. He has a special character for leadership, and we worked together to ensure our mutual military mission is as effective

as possible. The relationship between us is stronger due to dedication and hard work. Thank you for the good communication, transparency and trust we have built during the past year."

"I have already been warmly welcomed with open arms and I look forward to developing genuine friendships and being a small part of the continuing 30-year partnership between the United States and Kuwait," Ensen said.

On the sidelines of the ceremony, US Charge d'Affaires James Holtsnider affirmed the US is looking forward to working with the Kuwait partners on the Al-Durra gas field, saying Kuwait was clear about the claims of their ownership of the field. He indicated US President Joe Biden has repeatedly condemned the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, affirming the US will continue to support Ukrainian people in their right to defend themselves.

ASG-KU is the US Army Central unit responsible for garrison operations at army facilities in Kuwait, including Camp Arifjan, Camp Buehring, Kuwait Naval Base and Shuaiba Port, implementing the defense cooperation agreement governing the US military's relationship with Kuwait, and providing force protection for forces in Kuwait. Before the change of command ceremony, Wohlgenuth was awarded the Legion of Merit by Frank.



Lt Gen Patrick Frank (left) honors Col Martin Wohlgenuth.



Brig Gen Fahad Al-Otaibi, Kuwaiti Military Cooperation Office Director, speaks at the event.

Local

Athletes in Kuwait turn to powerlifting for physical, psychological benefits

Sport inspires females despite being perceived as masculine

By Ahmad Ali

KUWAIT: Powerlifting is a sport that consists of performing three movements with a barbell — squat, bench press and deadlift. They are compound exercises, meaning they employ multiple muscles within the body, and are primarily strength focused. The sport has been seeing a tremendous amount of growth worldwide in recent years, notably in places such as New Zealand, France, Sweden and Canada, and Kuwait is no exception.

In the last few years, a growing number of casual gym goers and especially the youth have been orienting themselves more towards competitive powerlifting. Khaled Al-Sager, a 17-year-old competitive powerlifter who started his journey in 2022, describes his introduction to the sport. "I used to bodybuild like every kid who just wanted to get bigger, and I began to realize I was not as strong as I wanted in compound exercises. I started researching more and looking into powerlifting until my training shifted completely to it," he said.

When asked why he specifically picked powerlifting and what he feels towards the sport, he said: "It improves my day-to-day life and my physical strength; it improves my mental health and my confidence and how strong I really am and can be". Sager has competed in multiple championships, including the 2022 Asian Powerlifting Championship, where he was

the first ever Kuwaiti sub-junior, or minor, to win gold in a continental powerlifting competition. He's just an example of many young athletes in Kuwait who have been shifting more towards powerlifting with aspirations.

A niche sport

Sager is coached by Anthony Graziani, a French powerlifting coach settled in Kuwait since 2019. An experienced instructor in the discipline, he coaches athletes both in Kuwait and abroad and is planning to open his own powerlifting gym later this summer. "Powerlifting is still a niche sport, with a minimal number of places equipped for it. However, it is also a growing sport with more media exposure. Competitions are getting busier than they were six years ago, with more and more brands growing around the sport," he told Kuwait Times.

On the benefits of powerlifting, he said: "Powerlifting is beneficial, if taught properly and with correct technique, to build strength. It will create a resilient body with a better understanding on how nutrition and recovery is important in life in general, but also under the bar."

Women are welcome

As the popularity of powerlifting in Kuwait grows, this sport predominantly practiced by males is also seeing a greater female presence. "I had always been seen as small, petite and 'weak' until I decided to change that," said Ra-

ghad Al-Hindi, a junior powerlifter. "I was such a scared person; powerlifting aided in giving me a confidence boost and helped me manage my emotions in a healthy way. I never used to take risks or try anything out of my comfort zone, and I'm so glad I did," she said.

Hindi also gave her perspective on women's presence in a mainly male practice. "I feel a lot safer knowing more women are joining this sport. Not a lot of women would be comfortable with such a sport because they're scared of getting bulky, which is impossible. It will take time to change this idea".

When asked about how she feels about powerlifting, Hanouf Al-Tamimi said: "I feel accomplished, because I see the difference in everyday life, like carrying my bags or carrying little babies in the family. I see my body composition changing for the better. When I started competing, it made me feel so alive and fulfilled for the hard work to pay off. The work is taking me somewhere, and I'd love to be a strong mother who inspires her children to get stronger and depend on themselves."

Tamimi also believes women until recent years were never encouraged to lift heavy weights due to misconceptions. "I'd suggest to women to give powerlifting a chance, because it strengthens your body to be used daily, and it'll help you believe in yourself. The first step is always the biggest, and then you see just what you're made of," she noted.



Psychological benefits

"Powerlifting has had a huge impact on my confidence; it requires you to be a risk taker and to come back from defeat. The sport helped me mature and develop," added Sager, who like many others believes the mental benefits from powerlifting cannot be overstated.

"I suffered from anxiety and depression. I used to be overweight and inactive most of my life. After more than a decade of starting my fitness journey prior to powerlifting, it was mostly about aesthetic goals. In powerlifting you are faced with challenges that push

your physical threshold, breaking limits and consistently outdoing your previous self," said Hussain Al-Mosawi, a Kuwaiti powerlifting coach.

"Besides the physiological benefits, it's the constant opportunity to defy our fears and insecurities. You end up building mental fortitude and learn about yourself as you face challenges that can make you feel uncomfortable and come out of it even stronger. Sure, there are limits, but that's what makes this discipline so great, because we get to understand them more and learn to break those barriers," he explained.

Mental health support key to protect children: Mother of child actress

By Munirah Al-Fayez

KUWAIT: Retaj Sbati is an eight-year-old actress and TV host seen in multiple KTV children's shows. She became famous, says her mother Entesar Ameryan, because of her talent in acting and her abilities. Ameryan said Retaj was always a confident child, which led to teachers, producers, directors and actors supporting her in this direction.

Ameryan, who is a mother of four including Retaj, said she always liked children and playing with children. "I would always tell Retaj and her siblings stories and I try to teach them and guide them in the right direction. I found these qualities that I had in my daughter Retaj. She was probably copying what I did, so I allowed her to play my role in the house as a teacher and storyteller," she said.

Retaj would always say "Mom I want to become famous," Ameryan said. So, she thought to herself: "Why don't I give her the space to do that, since she has this talent and confidence in herself? Why don't I give Retaj the right to express herself?" From then, Ameryan said, "We started this journey with Retaj. I thought I need to give her the chance and confidence in herself so that she can become someone who is important in life. I always tell her do not become someone well known for yourself or others; become someone who makes an impact in the society you live in."

When asked about how she protects her daughter from the negative effects of fame and social media, Ameryan said: "For me as a mother, I must adapt my children mentally from a very young age to life's problems and struggles, whether they are famous or not. I must do this because children go through a lot of difficulties in life. It could be in school or in their day-to-day life, like in friendships, relationships, society or anywhere else. Anything could happen to a child. It could be success or failure or bullying — there are so many things a child can go through."

This is her role as a mother, Ameryan said. "I am re-



KUWAIT: Retaj Sbati, an eight-year-old child actress, sings at an event. Entesar Ameryan, her mother, says parents must teach their children how to care for their mental health.

sponsible for my children and I must help them mentally adapt. I should teach them and educate them on how to deal with mental difficulties. I should tell them that fame and success do not mean that you are better than everyone. I do not believe in failure. I believe failure is the first step towards success," she said.

"I constantly tell my children that every person, whenever they fail, should pick themselves up once and twice and thrice until they are able to stand up straight. You might think that children do not understand these things, but they do. Do not take everything personally. You must move on from certain things in order to survive. I say these things almost daily to all my children. I remind them that God is with them. I remind them to have faith in God so they are ready for the world," Ameryan said.

When asked about the effect of fame on her daughter, Ameryan answered with a smile. "The effect of fame on Retaj so far has been positive and not negative, thanks to God. This is because Retaj became more confident after she became famous. Retaj now dresses well and takes care of herself in a way that is much better than she used to before.



BERLIN: German Foreign Ministry official Tobias Tonkel and Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Ambassador Sadeq Marafi are seen in this photo. — KUNA

German official commends Kuwait's mediation efforts

BERLIN: A German Foreign Ministry official expressed his country's appreciation to Kuwait's role towards several issues, and international and regional challenges. This came during a meeting held between Director of Middle East and North Africa Region Department at the German Foreign Ministry Tobias Tonkel and Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for Europe Affairs Ambassador Sadeq Marafi on Saturday in Berlin. Tonkel stressed the deep-rooted and distinguished ties between the two countries, referring to a common desire to develop mutual interests. Tonkel emphasized that Kuwait has been an effective player in the region and who continuously exerts efforts to balance its interests and act as a mediator in conflicts.

Marafi told KUNA that the meeting was among other gatherings he would hold with some officials at several European Foreign Ministries, including Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. The aim of such meetings is to enhance relations and discuss international and regional developments and challenges of common concern, Marafi said.

Stronger ties with Germany

Last June, Kuwaiti officials attended the fifth session of the Gulf-German Dialogue Forum on Security and Cooperation, where Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Salem Al-Sabah underlined the importance of cooperating with Germany as it is "one of the most important decision-makers in Europe."

"Boosting denominators is more beneficial than focusing on matters of difference in national policy," he said in a speech at the conference.

At the same event, GCC Secretary General Jaseem Al-Budaiwi said GCC countries, including Kuwait, are interested in deepening economic and trade relations with Germany and boosting collaboration not only in the fields of energy security, renewable energy and green hydrogen. They also seek to expand their joint endeavors to include new fields like education, scientific research, vocational training, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity. — KUNA



Firefighters battle 2 blazes in Salmy, Rai

KUWAIT: Shiqaya and vocational Jahra fire centers responded to a call about a blaze in four vehicles in Salmy area. The fire was put out and no injuries were reported, according to a statement. The cause of the fire was not released to the public. Fire brigades from Shuwaikh industrial, Al-Ardiya, Al-Shaheed centers extinguished a fire that broke out in a warehouse for aluminum storage in Al-Rai. No injuries were reported.

Late last week, the Kuwait Fire Force closed down 50 "locations" across several municipalities for violating safety regulations. The fire force said in a statement that the owners of these locations did not respond to previous warnings demanding they remedy these encroachments.



Kuwait University begins accepting applications

KUWAIT: Kuwait University announced that applications for the first semester of the 2023/2024 academic year are now open. Students who meet the admission requirements can visit the website <http://portal.ku.edu.kw/admission> starting Saturday July 15 until Wednesday July 26.

Admission is currently only open to students who graduated from Kuwaiti schools and meet any of the following criteria: Kuwaitis, Kuwaiti women's children, GCC citizens, illegal residents who are not Kuwaiti women's children, graduates of the unified system, the religious institute, American schools, graduates of English schools and those expected to graduate from them.

Government employees who wish to study while working won't be able to apply this semester. Sources said the university will begin accepting applications from them beginning the second semester.

Acting Dean of Admission and Registration at the university Dr Rawaa Al-Jarallah said in a statement that for students from other admission categories should check

the admission and registration hall at the Sabah Al-Salem University City for their allocated application time slots.

Kuwaiti students and Kuwaiti women's children need at least a 70 percent if they graduated from the science stream or 78 percent if they are arts grads to compete for a seat at the university. Applications will be accepted from high school graduates for the academic years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023.

Admission results will be announced "within days" from the end of the application period, said Jarallah, in addition to the minimum GPAs accepted in each major. Students will be informed of their acceptance and registration dates via text message. — KUNA



Dr Rawaa Al-Jarallah

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A squad of Kuwait's 25th Commando Brigade of the Kuwait Army, commonly known as the 25th Commando, is partaking in a joint drill with Jordanian forces in Jordan, to take place from July 15 until July 28. The Ministry of Defense indicated in a statement that the squad had already departed to participate in the joint maneuvers which aim at unifying some administrative and operational concepts for further coordination in the environment of joint operations. — KUNA

Early intervention key to limiting obesity rates in Kuwait: Doctor

Kuwait ranks first in obesity among Arab countries

KUWAIT: Head of health enhancement administration at the Ministry of Health Dr Abeer Al-Bahouh affirmed that the rise in obesity rate in Kuwait, especially between the age of 18 to 29, calls for early intervention to fight obesity. In an interview with KUNA on Saturday, Dr Al-Bahouh noted that statistics have shown a prominent rise in obesity, making Kuwait become the number one country in the Arab World, with 77 percent of the total population being overweight, while obesity rate is over 40 percent. Being overweight is a global problem, with expectations that four billion people will suffer from the issue by 2035, compared with 2.6 billion people in 2020. This is reflected in the rise in population numbers from 38 percent in 2020 to an expected above 50 percent by 2035, she added.

She noted that obesity rate is expected to be the highest among children and teenagers, rising from

ten percent to 20 percent among boys from 2020 to 2035, while the percentage among girls will go from eight to 18 percent around the world. Dr Al-Bahouh warned against the risks posed by obesity on people's health, including heart and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and high pressure. She added that obesity is the fifth main cause of death.

Obesity has many negative effects on children's health as well, such as trouble breathing, fatigue, sweating, snoring, joint pain and late puberty for girls and boys, she said. Children's obesity is caused by bad eating habits, sedentary lifestyle, genetic factors, intestine flora and Cushing's syndrome. According to local statistics and the World Health Organization (WHO), one in five adults suffer from extreme obesity in the Gulf, she said, adding that obesity rate among adults in Kuwait is expected to reach 52 percent by 2035. The doctor noted that treating obese children begins with teaching them healthy eating habits, encouraging them to engage in physical activity, therapy sessions with a psychiatrist and treating patients with

health issues leading to obesity, the doctor noted.

As for surgery targeting the stomach and intestines for weight loss, Dr Al-Bahouh affirmed that it's a suitable step for teenagers and not children. She stressed that these surgeries do not replace a proper diet and exercise, but they are an initial step to help people start their weight loss journey. It is the parents' responsibility to watch what their children eat and teach them to replace fast foods and soft drinks with fruits, vegetables, wholegrain products, water, natural juices and low-fat milk, she added.

She underlined the importance of physical exercise, having a regular sleeping schedule, spending time with family doing fun activities and avoiding spending too much time playing videogames or watching TV. She also affirmed the need for the Ministry of Health to launch programs and strategies to fight obesity and make physical education a compulsory subject in schools. The administration is continuously launching campaigns in cooperation with other bodies outside the ministry, aiming to limit obesity in the coming five years, the doctor said. — KUNA



Scan & Subscribe KD 20 a year

For Individuals Only



Scan Now

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



Tel: 24833199 Ext: 220



NBK staff are seen with Lord Mayor of the City of London Dominic Johnson and other British officials.

NBK receives Lord Mayor of London

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) hosted Dominic Johnson, Lord Mayor of the City of London, and his accompanying delegation for a luncheon at its headquarters, on the sidelines of their visit to Kuwait.

Lord Johnson and the accompanying delegation were welcomed by members of NBK executive management. Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait, welcomed the visitors, expressing his appreciation to the Mayor of the City of London and his role in building resilient bilateral relations between Kuwait and London, which hosts many leading Kuwaiti financial institutions.

This visit reflects the solid long-standing ties that bring together the business communities in both countries and yielded decades of successful business and financial relations, extending to exchange of expertise and visions, and significantly contributing to serve the mutual interests of the two countries.

The mayor's visit to Kuwait is part of his tour to promote economic and trade relations between Kuwait and the UK, in addition to unlocking investment opportunities and discussing areas of cooperation across various sectors. During the visit, other issues were addressed, including the latest financial and economic developments, both locally and globally.

NBK always seeks to strengthen its presence in



KUWAIT: Isam Al-Sager, Vice Chairman and Group CEO of National Bank of Kuwait, presents Lord Mayor of the City of London Dominic Johnson with a souvenir.

the main financial markets, foremost of which is the City of London, in line with the Bank's strategy to support trade exchange between developed economies and countries in the region, in addition to serving its customers around the world. It also aims to strengthen relations with major London-based international companies seeking to launch their business in Kuwait and the region.

NBK's international presence spans many of the world's leading financial centers including branches, subsidiaries and representative offices in China, Geneva, London, Paris, New York, and Singapore, alongside its regional presence in Lebanon, Egypt, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and UAE.



Heavy rains, floods, landslides leave 22 dead in South Korea

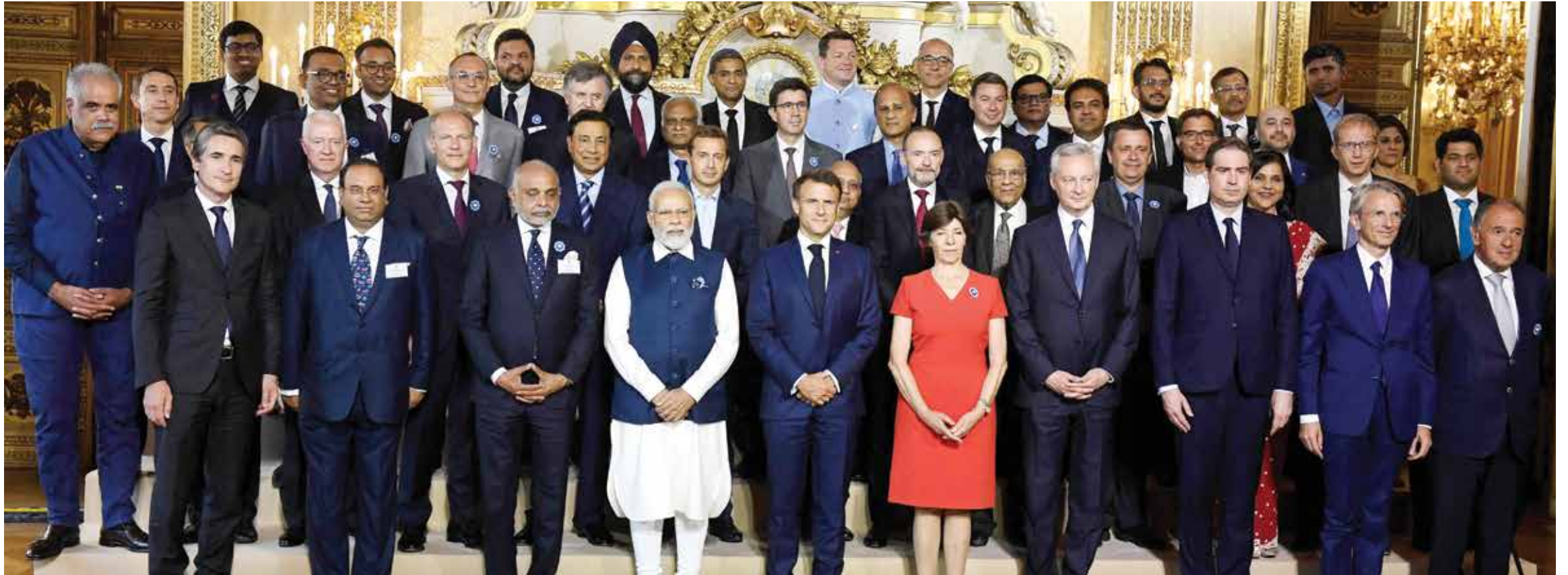
Azerbaijan, Armenia hold talks, Baku criticizes Karabakh rebels

Page 6

Page 7

Modi feted in France, deals signed

Tense Bastille Day celebrations held two weeks after riots swept country



PARIS: France's President Emmanuel Macron and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi pose for a group photo at the end of the Franco-Indian economic forum at the ministry of foreign affairs on July 14, 2023. — AFP photos

PARIS: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was honored during France's Bastille Day celebrations on Friday, which are taking place under tight security two weeks after riots swept the country. Around 45,000 police were deployed while firework sales have been banned as the government aims to prevent a repeat of the urban violence seen at the end of June following the police killing of a teenager.

The annual Bastille Day festivities, which mark the storming of the Bastille prison at the start of the French Revolution in 1789, kicked off with a traditional military parade in the morning. Tanks, planes, infantry soldiers and even cavalry swept down the Champs Elysees, while an aerobatics team flew overhead. Several hundred Indian soldiers also took part, and three of the 36 French-made Rafale fighter jets acquired by New Delhi as part of a sweeping military overhaul also flew over Paris.

"We were able to all see a marvelous image of our cooperation on sea, land and in the skies," Modi told Macron during a joint statement by the leaders following talks at the presidential palace. The Indian defense ministry on Thursday announced its intention to procure another 26 Rafales for use on its new aircraft carrier, as well as three more Scorpene-class submarines, a deal expected to be worth billions of euros.

Top award for Modi

Macron's red carpet welcome comes weeks af-

ter Modi was given the rare honor of a White House state dinner in Washington — a city he was once banned from visiting. Despite differences over the war in Ukraine and concerns over human rights in India, Western democracies are courting New Delhi as a military and economic counterweight to China. "We share concerns over the risks of fragmentation of the international community" over the war, said Macron, while Modi said India was ready to "contribute to restore lasting peace."

Macron referred to a "convergence" between France and India 25 years after they first signed a strategic partnership deal. "We defend the same idea together of the Indo-Pacific, a space that must remain open and free of all hegemonic power," he said during the press conference with Modi, in a veiled reference to Beijing. Ahead of the parade, Macron awarded Modi the grand cross of the Legion of Honour, the country's top order of merit.

Modi and Macron signed a raft of deals that would see increased co-operation in the space industry — with a joint satellite maritime surveillance system — plans to develop helicopter engines and initiatives to fight plastic waste and develop solar power.

'Loss of confidence'

Bastille Day was a more sober affair than in previous years following five nights of rioting from June 27 after the fatal shooting by police of a teenager



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron welcomes Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for dinner at the Elysee Palace on July 13, 2023.

in a Paris suburb. The most intense urban clashes in nearly two decades saw thousands of cars torched, public property destroyed and more than 3,700 people arrested, many of them minors. Some towns have cancelled their traditional firework displays.

Far-right opposition leader Marine Le Pen said the measures were "an admission of a total loss of confidence in the state". After a banquet with 200

guests at the Louvre Museum Friday evening, Macron and Modi watched the Paris fireworks display marking the end of Bastille Day.

Hindu nationalism

Amid the diplomatic courting of Modi, a resolution from the European Parliament on Thursday served as a reminder that he and his Hindu nationalist agenda have garnered critics at home and abroad. EU parliamentarians approved a motion urging India to end violence in northeastern Manipur state and protect minorities there.

Clashes between the majority Meitei, who are mostly Hindus, and the mainly Christian Kuki tribe have left at least 120 people dead, 50,000 displaced and more than 1,700 houses destroyed, the parliament said. It criticized the "nationalist rhetoric" of the local state government, run by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party. Opposition left-wing politicians in India criticized the wooing of Modi, with French Socialist party boss Olivier Faure calling him a "fascistic autocrat".

The Indian leader lauded his country's economic performance under his stewardship in a speech to thousands of Indians living in France on Thursday evening and stressed the country's growing clout in global affairs. "India is the mother of democracy and India is the model of diversity. This is a great strength of ours," he added. — AFP

South Korea to 'expand scale' of aid to Ukraine

KYIV: South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol pledged Saturday to "expand the scale" of his country's humanitarian and non-lethal military assistance to Ukraine, in his first visit to the war-torn country. The world's ninth-largest arms exporter, South Korea has a long-standing policy to not supply lethal weapons to active conflict zones. Seoul "will expand the scale of supplies from last year, when we provided materials such as helmets and bullet-proof vests," Yoon said.

Yoon added that humanitarian aid would be increased to \$150 million in 2023, from \$100 million last year. He made the announcement at a joint press conference with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. "Thank you for the meaningful talks. Thank you for your strong support," Zelensky said at the joint briefing. "We talked about everything that is important for people to lead a

normal and safe life," Zelensky told journalists.

He thanked Yoon "for your new initiatives to provide financial, technical and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine" without going into detail. The Ukrainian leader also praised the transfer of vehicles and demining equipment that "help us save lives". Before the meeting, Yoon visited Bucha, the site of an alleged massacre by Russia troops. "Ukraine now reminds me of South Korea of the past," Yoon said, hailing the international assistance that allowed his country to "pull off a miraculous victory" over the North and eventually rise to become one of the world's major economies.

Seoul, which remains technically at war with nuclear-armed North Korea, produces significant volumes of NATO-compatible weaponry, including its tanks, howitzers and sought-after shell ammunition. It has sold tanks and howitzers to Poland — a key ally for Kyiv as it battles invading Russian forces. Seoul has previously hinted it could reconsider its policy of not supplying lethal aid, Yoon saying earlier this year that a large-scale Russian attack on civilians could tip the balance.

But in May, South Korea dismissed a US media report that its artillery rounds were headed to



KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his South Korean counterpart Yoon Suk Yeol shake hands following talks on July 15, 2023. — AFP

Ukraine, saying its position on not providing lethal aid to Kyiv was unchanged. Experts warn that South Korea is in a tricky position because of its economic ties with Russia — its 15th-largest trading partner as of 2022 — as well as Moscow's influence over North Korea. — AFP

Damascus conditions for cross-border aid 'unacceptable': UN

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations is concerned about "unacceptable conditions" set by Damascus for allowing aid to flow through its Bab al-Hawa crossing to rebel-held areas in northwest Syria, according to a document reviewed Friday by AFP. The delivery of humanitarian aid through the crossing has been stalled since Monday, when a 2014 UN deal expired.

A letter this week from Syrian authorities allowing use of the border crossing between Turkey and Syria "contains two unacceptable conditions," according to a document sent to the UN Security Council from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). OCHA said it was concerned that the Syrian government had "stressed that the United Nations should not communicate with entities designated as 'terrorist'."

The second condition it briddled at was that the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) should "supervise and facilitate the distribution of humanitarian aid" in northwest Syria. The UN says more than four million people in northwest Syria are in need of food, water, medicine and other essentials.

Through an arrangement that began in 2014, the UN largely delivers relief to northwest Syria via neighboring Turkey through the Bab al-Hawa crossing. Syria announced on Thursday that it would authorize the UN to use Bab al-Hawa to deliver vital humanitarian aid to millions of people in rebel-held areas for six months. Syria's ambassador to the UN Bassam Sabbagh told reporters on Thursday that his country had taken a "sovereign decision" on allowing the aid to continue.

That announcement followed the expiration on Monday of a mechanism that has allowed UN convoys to use the crossing to rebel areas without authorization from Damascus. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' spokesman Stephane Dujarric said on Friday that "there's been no crossings in Bab al-Hawa with United Nations humanitarian aid," adding that authorities were reviewing Syria's authorization. "We're taking a look at... what exactly was expressed in the letter," he said. "These things need to be studied carefully," he added, reiterating the UN's "commitment to delivering humanitarian assistance guided by humanitarian principles of non-interference, of impartiality." — AFP

Iraqis beat summer heat by swimming in shrinking Tigris

BAGHDAD: With scorching temperatures and power cuts, Wissam Abed cools off from Baghdad's brutal summer by swimming in the Tigris river, but as Iraqi rivers dry up, so does the age-old pastime. Near a bridge linking the east of the city to the west, Abed stood in the middle of the river, but the water only came up to his waist. "I live here in Ad-hamiya, like my grandfather did before me. Year after year, the water situation gets worse," said the 37-year-old, referring to his neighborhood nestled along the Tigris in northern Baghdad.

Abed waded through the water to the middle of the ancient river, as temperatures reached near 50 degrees Celsius and wind whipped through the city like a hair dryer one July afternoon. He told AFP he comes to the Tigris "to have fun and feel refreshed". Summer in Iraq

is a prime example of the convergences of multiple crises weighing down the lives of the 43-strong population: a dilapidated electricity sector, rising temperatures and severe water shortages.

The United Nations says Iraq is one of the five countries in the world most touched by some effects of climate change. In parts Baghdad, home to around nine million people, the water is still deep enough for youths to enjoy diving into the water from mounds of bricks. But elsewhere, new islets of earth stick out from the middle of the river. "In the evening when we return to our homes, there is no water or electricity," said Abed, a public employee at the ministry of electricity. Last night, "I came to swim in the river at one o'clock in the morning before returning" home.

In addition to the declining levels of



BAGHDAD: An Iraqi dives into the waters of the Tigris river on July 12, 2023, as temperatures soared past 45 degrees Celsius. — AFP

rainfall, Iraqi authorities say upstream dam construction by Turkey and Iran has impacted the volume of the water that runs in rivers through Iraq. Rav-

aged by decades of conflict and international sanctions, oil-rich Iraq relies on Iranian gas imports for a third of its energy needs. — AFP

International

Azerbaijan, Armenia hold talks as Russia proposes Moscow summit

Baku says Karabakh separatists 'pose threat' to flights

BAKU: Azerbaijan and Armenia held a fresh round of EU-mediated peace talks Saturday, while Russia offered a summit in Moscow in an effort to reassert a lead role in the normalization process. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan met in Brussels for talks aimed at resolving their decades-long conflict for the control of Armenian-populated Karabakh, the foreign ministry in Baku said in a statement.

European Council President Charles Michel was mediating the discussions, which come amid renewed tensions after Azerbaijan closed temporarily the Lachin corridor, the sole land link between Karabakh and Armenia. Baku and Yerevan have been seeking to negotiate a peace agreement with the help of the European Union and United States, whose diplomatic engagement in the Caucasus has irked traditional regional power broker Russia.

Moscow on Saturday offered to host the two countries' foreign ministers and suggested the future peace treaty could be signed in Moscow. Russia is ready "to organize a trilateral meeting of the foreign ministers in Moscow in the near future," the country's foreign ministry said in a statement. It offered to hold later a "Russian-Azerbaijani-Armenian summit in Moscow to sign the relevant (peace) treaty."

Adding to the recent standoff with Yerevan, Azerbaijan's defense ministry said Armenian separatist forces in Karabakh "use radio interference against GPS navigation systems of local and foreign airlines' passenger aircraft flying through our country's airspace". The alleged interference impacted two Azerbaijan Airlines aircraft on Thursday, the ministry said. "Such incidents pose a serious threat to aviation safety," according to the statement. Karabakh's rebel authorities denied the claims, calling them an "absolute lie."



STEPANAKERT: Demonstrators hold their fists in the air during a rally to demand the reopening of a blockaded road linking the Nagorno-Karabakh region to Armenia and to decry crisis conditions in the region on July 14, 2023. — AFP

Uneasy peace talks

On Friday, some 6,000 people rallied in Karabakh to demand the reopening of the Lachin corridor. Local separatists, warning of a humanitarian crisis, urged Moscow to ensure free movement through the road. Azerbaijan later allowed the Red Cross to resume medical evacuations from Karabakh to Armenia. Karabakh has been at the center of a decades-long territorial dispute between the two countries, which have fought two wars over the mountainous territory, mainly

populated by Armenians. During previous rounds of Western-mediated talks, Baku and Yerevan have made some progress towards preparing the text of a peace agreement, but its signature remains a distant prospect. Yerevan agreed to recognize Karabakh as part of Azerbaijan, but demanded international mechanisms for protecting the rights and security of the region's ethnic-Armenian population. Baku insists such guarantees must be provided at the national level, rejecting any international format. — AFP

Sudan mediation to resume as war enters 4th month

WAD MADANI, Sudan: Sudanese army representatives have returned to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia for talks with their paramilitary foes, a government source said Saturday as the war between rival generals entered its fourth month. "A delegation of the armed forces has returned to Jeddah to resume negotiations with Rapid Support Forces (RSF) rebels," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to media. The RSF has made no comment on returning to the talks in Jeddah, which Saudi and US mediators adjourned last month after a series of repeatedly violated ceasefires. On April 15, a power struggle between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy, RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, burst into all-out war, claiming at least 3,000 lives and displacing more than three million people.

The delegation in Saudi Arabia signals a return to diplomatic efforts by the army, after it boycotted talks last week in Ethiopia hosted by east African regional bloc IGAD. Khartoum's foreign ministry had objected to Kenyan President William Ruto's leadership of the IGAD quartet, accusing Nairobi of siding with the RSF. Before the Jeddah talks were suspended, US mediators had grown increasingly frustrated with both sides' reluctance to work towards a sustained truce. Experts believe that both Burhan and Daglo have opted for a war of attrition instead, hoping to extract more concessions at the negotiating table later.



OMDOURMAN: A vegetable vendor waits for customers on July 15, 2023. — AFP

No respite

For three months, barely a day has passed for residents of the capital Khartoum without their homes shaking from constant air strikes, artillery blasts and gun battles. To escape the brutal urban warfare and rampant looting, 1.7 million people have fled the capital, according to the United Nations. Millions remain in the city, however, sheltering at home as the violence shows no signs of abating.

Witnesses in the city's northwest reported "clashes using various types of weapons" on Saturday, after a day of heavy fighting Friday left plumes of black smoke over several parts of the capital. Others said RSF drones had targeted Khartoum's largest military hos-

pital. The UN has said that most hospitals in combat zones are out of service.

The worst fighting has taken place in Khartoum and in the western region of Darfur, where a quarter of Sudan's 48 million people live. Entire villages and neighborhoods there have been destroyed, civilians buried in mass graves and officials assassinated for their ethnic background by the RSF and allied Arab militias. Reports of atrocities — including sexual violence and civilians being targeted for their ethnicity — have prompted the International Criminal Court to launch a war crimes investigation. Though most of the fighting has been concentrated in Khartoum and Darfur, new fronts have sporadically opened up, particularly in the south where witnesses said a rebel group took an army base in South Kordofan state on Friday.

Compounding disasters

Those who successfully flee combat zones are not out of harm's way. More than 2.4 million people have been displaced to other parts of Sudan, where roadblocks, the breakdown of the banking system and fragile health services mean responders are ill-equipped to meet soaring demand. Aid groups and health workers repeatedly warn that without humanitarian corridors — which the army and RSF both had pledged but which failed to materialize — disease outbreaks and overwhelmed care facilities could spell disaster. The UN says 740,000 people have fled across borders to Sudan's neighbors, some of which face economic crises or political instability themselves. In impoverished South Sudan, the closure of trade with its northern neighbor, combined with the influx of returnees and refugees, is jeopardizing an already fragile humanitarian situation, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross. — AFP

Record heatwaves sweep world...

Continued from Page 1

least one landslide, forcing 9,000 people to evacuate their homes. Torrential rains described by the meteorological agency as the "heaviest rain ever experienced" have also hit southern Japan in recent weeks, leaving at least 11 people dead.

Relentless monsoon rains have reportedly killed at least 90 people in northern India, after burning heat. The Yamuna river running through the capital New Delhi has reached a record high of 208.66 m, more than a meter over the flood top set in 1978, threatening low-lying neighborhoods in the megacity of more than 20 million people. Major flooding and landslides are common during India's monsoons, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency and severity.

Americans are watching as a powerful heatwave grips stretches from California to Texas, with its peak expected this weekend. In Arizona, one of the hardest-hit states, residents face a daily endurance marathon against the sun. State capital Phoenix recorded 15 straight days above 43C, with Saturday expected to reach well above that mark. Authorities have been sounding the alarm, advising people to avoid outdoor activities in the daytime and to be wary of dehydration.

The Las Vegas weather service warned that assuming high temperatures naturally come with the area's

desert climate was "a DANGEROUS mindset! This heatwave is NOT typical desert heat". "Now the most intense period is beginning," it added, as the weekend arrived with record highs threatening on Sunday.

California's Death Valley, one of the hottest places on Earth, is also likely to register new peaks Sunday, with the mercury possibly rising to 54C. Southern California is fighting numerous wildfires, including one in Riverside County that has burned more than 3,000 acres and prompted evacuation orders. Further north, the Canadian government reported that wildfires burned a record-breaking 10 million hectares this year, with more damage expected as the summer drags on.

Morocco may be used to hot weather, but it was slated for above-average temperatures this weekend with highs of 47C in some provinces — more typical of August than July — sparking concerns for water shortages, the meteorological service said. Water-scarce Jordan was forced to dump 214 tons of water on a wildfire that broke out in the Ajloun forest in the north amid a heatwave, the army said.

In Iraq, where scorching summers are common, along with power cuts, Wissam Abed told AFP he cools off from Baghdad's brutal summer by swimming in the Tigris river. But as Iraqi rivers dry up, so does the age-old pastime. While it can be difficult to attribute a particular weather event to climate change, scientists insist global warming — linked to dependence on fossil fuels — is behind the multiplication and intensification of heat waves in the world. The heatwaves come after the EU's climate monitoring service said the world saw its hottest June on record last month. — AFP

Modi and the UAE president also stressed the need to take into consideration "the diverse national circumstances of each nation", the statement said, in an apparent nod to developing and emerging countries. During the visit, Modi also met Jaber. Expecting 70,000 participants, double the largest COP to date, this year's summit hopes to maintain the Paris Agreement's goal for capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Last month UN chief Antonio Guterres slammed the world's response to climate change. Climate policies currently adopted will lead to average temperatures 2.8 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times by the end of the century, said the secretary-general. Modi's visit to the UAE, home to a large Indian community, came after trips to the United States and France where he was feted by the presidents of both countries. — AFP

India launches mission to land...

Continued from Page 1

If the rest of the current mission goes to plan, the Chandrayaan-3, which means "Mooncraft" in Sanskrit, will safely touch down near the moon's little-explored south pole between Aug 23 and 24. Developed by ISRO, Chandrayaan-3 includes a lander module named Vikram, which means "valor" in Sanskrit, and a rover named Pragyan, the Sanskrit word for wisdom.

The mission comes with a price tag of \$74.6 million — far smaller than those of other countries — and a testament to India's frugal space engineering. Experts say India can keep costs low by copying and adapting existing space technology, and thanks to an abundance of highly skilled engineers who earn a fraction of their foreign counterparts' wages.

The Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft will take much longer to reach the Moon than the manned Apollo missions of the 1960s and 1970s, which arrived in a matter of days. The Indian rocket used is much less powerful than the United States' Saturn V and instead

Caffeine-heavy viral drink raises...

Continued from Page 1

or heart rhythm problems, according to the AACAP. Some children may be more sensitive than others.

"This product has one true target market: Children under the age of 18, and that is why I am sounding the alarm," said top Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer last week. Prime Energy comes in flavors that might attract younger kids, such as orange-mango and raspberry-melon. But the drink contains "eye-popping levels of caffeine for a child's body", the Senate majority leader said. The refreshment is fashionable because "it is born from the reels of social media and the enigmatic world of influencers", the senator said in a statement.

Schumer announced he had written to the head of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), demanding

Tunisia groups call for aid, shelter for stranded migrants

TUNIS: Tunisian rights groups called on Friday for emergency aid and shelters for migrants expelled from Sfax last week, as dozens of people protested in Tunis in support of their plight. Hundreds of migrants fled or were forced out of Tunisia's second-largest city after racial tensions flared following the July 3 killing of a Tunisian man in an altercation between locals and migrants. The port of Sfax is a departure point for many migrants from impoverished and violence-torn countries seeking a better life in Europe by making a perilous Mediterranean crossing, often in makeshift boats.

Hundreds of migrants were forcibly taken to desert and hostile areas bordering Libya and Algeria after the unrest in Sfax. Romdane Ben Amor, spokesperson for the Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights (FTDES), told reporters on Friday that between 100 and 150 migrants, including women and children, were still stuck on the border with Libya. He said about 165 migrants abandoned near the border with Algeria had been picked up, without specifying by whom or where they were taken.

"Migrants are transferred from one place to another while other groups hide out in the wild in catastrophic conditions for fear of being detected and suffering the same fate as those stranded on the borders," Ben Amor said. He called for emergency accommodation to be given to the migrants and said the authorities must send "a clear message" to Tunisian citizens to help them, regardless of their status.

Around 100 protesters demonstrated Friday evening in Tunis at the call of an anti-fascist coalition, expressing their "solidarity with undocumented migrants". The demonstrators also slammed Tunisia's police for "expelling you (migrants) and repressing us". "Tunisia is African. No to racism, down with fascism," they chanted.

Meanwhile, the head of a Cameroonian association claimed police had carried out "arbitrary arrests" of sub-Saharan Africans around the train station in Zarzis, south of Sfax. "Around 300 have been arrested... just because of their skin color," said Eric Tchata, who posted online a video taken by a fellow Cameroonian purporting to show a group of people, including women and children, packed into a warehouse in Medenine, also south of Sfax. — AFP



TUNIS: Demonstrators brandish placards and chant anti-racism slogans during a protest on July 14, 2023. — AFP

the probe will orbit the earth five or six times elliptically to gain speed, before being sent on a month-long lunar trajectory. If the landing is successful the rover will roll off Vikram and explore the nearby lunar area, gathering images to be sent back to Earth for analysis. The rover has a mission life of one lunar day or 14 Earth days.

"It is indeed a moment of glory for India. Thank you team ISRO for making India proud," Jitendra Singh, the junior minister for science and technology, told reporters after the launch. ISRO chief S Somanath has said his engineers carefully studied data from the last failed mission and tried their best to fix the glitches. India's space program has grown considerably in size and momentum since it first sent a probe to orbit the moon in 2008.

In 2014, it became the first Asian nation to put a satellite into orbit around Mars, and three years later, the ISRO launched 104 satellites in a single mission. The ISRO's Gaganyaan ("Skycraft") program is slated to launch a three-day manned mission into Earth's orbit by next year. India is also working to boost its two percent share of the global commercial space market by sending private payloads into orbit for a fraction of the cost of competitors. — AFP

an investigation into the levels of caffeine the drink contains and the marketing strategy adopted. The FDA responded this week that it is "reviewing the concerns" raised by the senator, and that it would respond to him directly. "We encourage caregivers and families to read a product's label before giving the product to their child," an FDA spokesperson said in a statement.

The can does feature a discreet line indicating that the drink is not recommended for those under 18, though the warning may not be obvious to everyone planning to pop one open. The FDA — which has already issued warnings in the past against several companies marketing both alcoholic and caffeinated beverages — noted that adults can generally consume up to 400 milligrams of caffeine per day without harmful effects, or four to five cups of coffee.

Paul partially responded to the controversy in a video posted to social media on Thursday. He said he was offended by articles in some media that reported that Canada had recalled Prime Energy cans, though the move was only an action against illegal imports, as the drink is not officially distributed there. — AFP

UAE and India vow 'successful'...

Continued from Page 1

controversial technologies to "abate", or neutralize, the emissions. Last year's climate summit in Egypt saw the creation of a new financial facility for poor countries already ravaged by impacts, but rebuffed attempts to spell out the need to ditch fossil fuels. That same fault line will run through COP28, pitting the European Union and scores of developing countries against China, India and other emerging giants, along with the United States, the world's largest oil and gas producer.

International

Heavy rains, floods, landslides leave 22 dead in South Korea

Thousands ordered to evacuate homes • All regular train services suspended

SEOUL: At least 22 people have died and 14 are missing after heavy rain caused flooding and landslides in South Korea, officials said Saturday, with thousands more ordered to evacuate their homes. South Korea is at the peak of its summer monsoon season and there has been heavy rainfall for the last three days, triggering widespread flooding and landslides, and causing a major dam to overflow.

The interior ministry reported that 22 people had been killed and another 14 were missing in the heavy downpours, mostly buried by landslides or after falling into a flooded reservoir. The majority of the casualties — including 16 dead and nine missing — were from North Gyeongsang province, largely due to massive landslides in the mountainous area that engulfed houses with people inside.

In the most severely affected areas, "entire houses were swept away whole", one emergency responder told the Yonhap News Agency. More than 6,400 residents in the central county of Gyeongsang were ordered to evacuate early Saturday as the Goesan Dam began overflowing and submerging low-lying villages nearby, the interior ministry said. Some of the people who have been reported missing were swept away when a river overflowed in North Gyeongsang province, the ministry said.

Flooded tunnel

Rescue workers were battling to reach some 19 cars trapped in a 430-metre-long underground tunnel in Cheongju, North Chungcheong province,

according to the interior ministry. One person was found dead, and nine people were rescued from a bus after flash flooding swept through the tunnel too quickly for people to escape, Yonhap reported. Water levels remained high and it is unclear how many people were trapped inside their vehicles, they added.

"There were many cars inside the tunnel when the water began coming in and it rose very rapidly," one of the nine survivors who was rescued from the bus in the tunnel told the news agency. "I don't understand why the tunnel wasn't closed earlier." Images broadcast on local television showed a torrential stream of water from a nearby river that had burst its banks flooding into the tunnel, as rescue workers struggled to use boats to get to victims inside.

The overall number of deaths is also expected to rise as local government agencies assess the damage nationwide, Yonhap said. All regular train services across the country were suspended as of 2 pm (0500 GMT), although KTX high-speed trains remained operational with potential schedule adjustments, according to the Korea Railroad Corporation. Roads were closed and trails in national parks shut due to the rain and flooding.

The Korea Meteorological Administration issued heavy rain warnings, saying more rain was forecast through to Wednesday next week, saying the weather conditions pose a "grave" danger. South Korean Prime Minister Han Duck-soo urged offi-



YECHON, South Korea: South Korean emergency workers search for survivors after a landslide hit a small village on July 15, 2023. — AFP

cial to preempt river overflows and landslides, and requested support for rescue operations from the defense ministry.

South Korea is regularly hit by flooding during the summer monsoon period, but the country is typically well-prepared and the death toll is usually relatively low. The country endured record-breaking rains and flooding last year, which left more than

11 people dead. They included three people who died trapped in a Seoul basement apartment of the kind that became internationally known because of the Oscar-winning Korean film "Parasite". The government said at the time that the 2022 flooding was the heaviest rainfall since Seoul weather records began 115 years ago, blaming climate change for the extreme weather. — AFP

China urges India to meet 'halfway' on border issue

BEIJING: China's top diplomat urged India to focus on "common interests" and meet China "halfway" to defuse border tensions between Asia's most populous neighbors, the Chinese foreign ministry said Saturday. Relations between India and China have deteriorated in recent months over their contested Himalayan border, and a visa spat in which the two sides have expelled nearly all of each other's journalists.

"China and India's common interests clearly outweigh their differences," Wang Yi told Indian foreign minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, when the two met Friday on the sidelines of Southeast Asian talks

in Jakarta, the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement. "The two sides should support each other, rather than... suspect each other," Wang added.

India and its northern neighbor are locked in a military standoff along their mostly undemarcated border in the Ladakh region. Beijing also claims the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh as part of Tibet, and it considers Kashmir a disputed territory. "It is hoped that the Indian side will meet China halfway and find a solution to the border issue that is acceptable to both sides," Wang said. The two countries have agreed to hold the next round of military commander-level talks on the border issue "as soon as possible", the ministry statement said. Despite frosty relations, China is India's second-largest trade partner. In 2020, India sought to limit investments from China as political tensions heightened between them, with their soldiers clashing in the disputed Himalayan region. "China is highly concerned about India's recent restrictive measures against Chinese companies," Wang added, while urging New Delhi to provide a "fair, transparent and non-discriminatory business environment". — AFP

its proposed revisions to the laws, which currently allow convicted critics of the monarchy to be jailed for up to 15 years.

'Help with this mission'

All 250 senators were appointed under the junta-drafted constitution, which political analyst Thitinan Pongsudhirak said was a reliable impediment to MFP's reformist platform. "It is a way for the authority and the regime to stay in power in the long term and to prevent a pro-democracy government that can stand against them," he told AFP on Friday. Pita urged his supporters on Saturday to get "creative" in urging senators to throw their support behind him in the next round.

"I alone can't change the senators' mind. Therefore, I ask everybody to help with this mission," he said. "Send a message to the senators in every way possible, every way you can think of." The MFP's largest coalition partner Pheu Thai is seen as a vehicle for the Shinawatra political family, whose members include two former prime ministers displaced by military coups in 2006 and 2014.

Property tycoon Srettha Thavisin, 60, is widely tipped to be Pheu Thai's candidate for prime minister if Pita's bid fails again. Liked by business leaders among Thailand's influential elite, he has been touted as a potential compromise candidate.

Wave of support

Pita rode a wave of support that saw voters emphatically reject almost a decade of army-backed rule under Prayut Chan-o-cha, who took power in the 2014 coup. But the MFP's reformist agenda has drawn strident objections from conservative supporters of the country's establishment. Thursday's vote on Pita's candidacy came just a day after Thailand's top election body recommended the Constitutional Court suspend Pita as an MP — providing more fuel for senators already poised to vote against him.

The electoral commission recommended Pita's suspension from parliament over allegations he broke campaign rules. The recommendation followed a probe into Pita's ownership of shares in a media company, which MPs are prohibited from holding under Thai law. The station has not broadcast since 2007, and Pita has said the shares were inherited from his father. The Constitutional Court has also agreed to hear a case alleging that the MFP's position on royal defamation laws is tantamount to a plan to "overthrow" the constitutional monarchy. — AFP

those sharing his last name. That made him ineligible to remain a member of parliament, or to stand in next year's election.

Modi's government has been widely accused of using the defamation law to silence critics. Gandhi filed an appeal asking the Supreme Court to stay his conviction, multiple Indian media reports said, a week after the Gujarat High Court refused to do so. Officials of Gandhi's Congress party did not immediately respond to requests by AFP for comment.

But earlier this month, party spokesperson Abhishek Manu Singhvi told reporters: "We have no doubt that this intersection of arrogance and infallibility shown by this government of the day and ruling party of the day will be dealt with properly in the Supreme Court." The

Singapore minister arrested in rare top level graft probe

SINGAPORE: Singapore's transport minister has been arrested in connection with a rare top-level corruption probe that has also ensnared a billionaire hotel tycoon, the country's anti-graft body has said. Transport Minister S Iswaran was "arrested on 11 July 2023" and "subsequently released on bail", the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) said in an emailed statement late Friday, confirming the arrest for the first time.

Hotel tycoon Ong Beng Seng, one of Singapore's richest people, was also arrested on the same day and released on bail in connection with the probe, the bureau said. The bureau has not disclosed details of the investigation that has gripped the city-state, a global financial hub reputed to be among the least corrupt countries in the world. Cabinet ministers are paid salaries comparable to the top earners in the private sector to deter corruption.



S Iswaran

The investigation of the transport chief by the powerful anti-graft bureau widened after it was disclosed that Ong was included in the probe. Ong is the managing director of Hotel Properties Limited (HPL), which owns a string of high-end hotels and resorts in locations around Asia and the Pacific. In a filing with the Singapore Exchange on Friday, the company said that Ong was given a "notice of arrest" by the CPIB and had posted bail.

While the passports of those under arrest are generally impounded, Ong was granted permission to leave Singapore on Friday, with the CPIB noting it considers requests for travel overseas "on a case-by-case basis". The CPIB said it had "acceded to Ong's request to travel overseas", but increased his bail to Sg\$100,000 (\$76,000). "Upon his return, Ong is required to report to CPIB and surrender his passport to the bureau," the CPIB added.

Ong, a Malaysian who is a Singapore permanent resident, is credited with helping bring the Formula One Grand Prix to Singapore in 2008. His private company Singapore GP and the Singapore Tourism Board last year renewed the contract to host the F1 race until 2028. Iswaran, meanwhile, had been ordered to go on leave earlier in the week by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong after the CPIB said the minister was "currently assisting" an ongoing investigation. Lee said the anti-graft body had sought his approval for a formal investigation that would involve interviewing Iswaran, among other people. — AFP

case — one of several lodged against Gandhi in recent years — has so far only been heard by courts in Gujarat, Modi's home state.

Gandhi is the scion of India's premier political dynasty and the son, grandson and great-grandson of former prime ministers, beginning with independence leader Jawaharlal Nehru. He is the leading face of the Congress party, once the dominant force in Indian politics but now a shadow of its former self. His conviction stemmed from a remark made during the 2019 election campaign when he asked why "all thieves have Modi as (their) common surname". Members of Modi's government said the remark was a slur against all Indians with the surname Modi, which is associated with the lower rungs of India's traditional caste hierarchy. — AFP



TAIPEI: Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen and Paraguay's President-elect Santiago Pena Palacios pose for photos with gifts during their meeting at the Presidential Office on July 12, 2023. — AFP

Pena says Taiwan ties make 'more sense' than China

TAIPEI: Paraguay's formal ties with Taiwan make "more sense" than recognizing China, and will be a greater boost to development in the South American nation, president-elect Santiago Pena said Saturday. Paraguay is the last remaining South American nation to recognize Taiwan over Beijing, which claims the island as its territory and has spent decades convincing Taipei's allies to switch. Pena, who was elected in late April and will be inaugurated next month, has been in Taiwan since Tuesday and his schedule has been packed with meetings and stops, including at a bubble tea shop with the island's President Tsai Ing-wen. He has vowed to stay on Taiwan's side during his five-year tenure, a point he reiterated during an interview with AFP and other media on Saturday.

"There are solid foundations and concrete facts that support why it makes more sense to have a relationship with Taiwan than with mainland China," he said. Despite formally recognizing Taiwan, Pena said there are "no constraints" to trade with China, with which Paraguay has "a very broad relationship" — China is Paraguay's top supplier of goods. "But for a country like Paraguay — small and a very open economy — we need to diversify our markets," he said.

Paraguay cannot depend on a single market because its "capacity of negotiation" is not the same as larger countries such as the United States and neighboring Brazil, which counts China as its largest export market, he said. "Reliance on a single market for some moments will be very good, but in other moments would be very, very bad."

The former finance minister had vowed on the campaign trail to maintain formal ties with Taiwan. His win in May soothed Taipei's fear that Paraguay would ditch it in favor of Beijing. Panama, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua and Honduras have all switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in recent years.

Paraguay has seen the experience of Costa Rica, Panama and "probably the same thing will happen now with Honduras, the economic situation will not improve but will worsen" after they ditched Taipei for Beijing, he said. "Our relationship with Taiwan is not an impediment to having trade relations with mainland China," Pena said, adding that "the restriction is the one placed by the People's Republic of China". "We have no constraints on doing trade with China, we would love to do more trade with" China, he said.

'Tremendous experience'

Beijing does not allow its diplomatic allies to also recognize Taipei, which only has formal ties with 13 countries. China has ramped up diplomatic, military, and economic pressure on Taiwan in recent years because Tsai does not accept that the island is a part of Chinese territory. Beijing staged sea and air military exercises for two days around the island while Pena was visiting, according to Taiwan's defense ministry.

This week's trip is not Pena's first to Taiwan — he came to the island 24 years ago for training and called it a "tremendous experience" to return. "It was my first trip to Asia, coming to Taiwan blew my mind about the world and the things that I haven't seen... coming here really shaped my view about the world," the 44-year-old former economist said. — AFP

Thai PM frontrunner says only one more shot at forming govt

BANGKOK: The liberal frontrunner to become Thailand's next prime minister said Saturday he would withdraw his candidacy if parliament did not endorse him next week, after military-appointed lawmakers foiled his first attempt. Pita Limjaroenrat's Move Forward Party (MFP) won the most seats in May elections, buoyed by young Thais eager for progressive reforms after nine years of army-backed rule in the kingdom.



BANGKOK: This screengrab shows Move Forward Party Leader and prime ministerial candidate Pita Limjaroenrat speaking about the upcoming prime minister vote on July 15, 2023. — AFP

But the Harvard-educated millionaire's campaign to lead the next government was knocked back Thursday by senators in parliament who consider his pledge to reform strict royal defamation laws a red line. The legislature holds its second ballot for a new prime minister on Wednesday, and Pita said he would support a candidate from coalition partner Pheu Thai if he again failed to win the needed votes.

"I'd like to apologize that we haven't succeeded," he said in a video address posted to social media. "I'm ready to give a chance to Thailand by letting the party that has the second most votes... be the one to form the coalition." Pita was 51 votes short of the 375 lawmakers he needed to support his candidacy during the first ballot. Just 13 senators voted for him, with many voicing their opposition to MFP's pledge to soften the kingdom's royal defamation laws. After the first ballot, the party ruled out compromising on

Gandhi appeals to top court over conviction

NEW DELHI: Top Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi appealed to the country's highest court on Saturday over his conviction for defamation, days after a lower court refused to intervene, media reports said. Gandhi was sentenced to two years' jail for comments he made in 2019 which a court ruled were insulting to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and

Business

SUNDAY, JULY 16, 2023

‘Like hell’: India coalfields burn

Deadly fires raging for a century in mines



DHANBAD: People sit along a road at an open-cast coal mine on the outskirts of Dhanbad in India's Jharkhand state. The underground fires in open-cast coal mines in eastern India have raged for over a century, blighting the lives of millions who depend on the dirty fuel for their livelihoods. — AFP photos



DHANBAD: A girl burns raw coal at an open-cast coal mine on the outskirts of Dhanbad in India's Jharkhand state.



DHANBAD: A woman pushes a motorcycle laden with coal bags near an open-cast coal mine on the outskirts of Dhanbad in India's Jharkhand state.

DHANBAD: Deadly fires have raged for a century in mines in India's Jharkhand state, where Savitri Mahto is one of 100,000 people risking their lives shoveling coal to supply insatiable demand. "The land is charred because of the fires," said Mahto, 22, illegally scavenging amid the flames on the edge of a vast commercial open-cast mine for the dirty fossil fuel. "We live in fear every day".

Underground fires, which scientists believe started in a mine accident in 1916, create sinkholes that swallow people and homes. Coal pickers and activists report hundreds of people have died over the decades. "Accidents have happened before, and they keep on happening because the land is sinking," Mahto told AFP, as she tended a stack of burning rocks to produce coking coal, a more stable fuel sold for cooking and firing brick kilns. "It is dangerous to live here," said Mahto, who dreams of being a nurse. "The houses can collapse anytime."

Coal consumption in India — the world's most populous nation and

fifth-biggest economy — has doubled in the last decade, powering nearly 70 percent of the electricity grid. Half of India's greenhouse gas emissions come from burning coal, and only China burns more. The fires, raging in pockets across opencast mines spread over nearly 300 square kilometers, have burned millions of tons of CO₂-belching coal, experts say. Ghostly glowing fires and sulphurous clouds create an apocalyptic feel.

'Coal is the lifeline'

"We have a responsibility towards the society as far as this environment is concerned," said Samiran Dutta, head of the commercial mine operator Bharat Coking Coal Ltd (BCCL), a subsidiary of state-owned Coal India. Dutta, saying BCCL was not responsible for those entering the mines illegally, added that the company was "procuring various gadgets" including mist sprinklers hoping to dampen air pollution. But efforts to extinguish the fires, including using liquid nitrogen and cutting trenches as firebreaks, have largely failed.

"The air is heavily polluted," Mahto said, tightening a scarf over her soot-blackened face, saying the constant exposure to poisonous gases burns her eyes and chokes her lungs. The coal pickers work in brutal conditions, but India's appetite for the fuel is huge. "Coal is the lifeline of Jharkhand," said A. K. Jha, a local trade union leader, claiming at current production that the mines could last for 200 years, with much of the coal used in the steel industry. "There will never be an end to coal."

Power demands are growing in India — the world's third-largest greenhouse gas emitter behind China and the United States — with a growing middle class buying energy-hungry air conditioners and refrigerators. Barely one degree Celsius of warming to date has made extreme weather more destructive and deadly, and UN climate experts warn the world could breach 1.5C above the preindustrial benchmark within a decade. India, with 1.4 billion people, points out its per capita emissions are below the global average

— and has pledged to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2070.

'Always scared'

State authorities began relocating people from the mines in 2008, but many say leaving means losing their livelihood. Sushila Devi, whose 15-year-old daughter Chanda Kumari died when the land collapsed four years ago while picking coal, said she must stay. "I am always scared that I might meet the same fate, but I am helpless," said Devi, who earns around six dollars from a day's hard labor. "If I don't work, what will I eat?"

Jha, the trade unionist, says that without other options, illegal coal picking will continue. "The key question is of livelihood," Jha said. "If the government is unable (to provide jobs), then people will have to make do with what nature has given". But vegetable seller Arjun Kumar, 32, whose home collapsed due to subsidence, said his "life will be like hell" if he is not relocated, because he will "be forced to live on the streets like a beggar". — AFP

News in Brief

Swedish inflation slows

STOCKHOLM: Swedish inflation slowed in June, but remained higher than expected at over nine percent, official statistics showed Friday, as central bank rate hikes have struggled to rein in rising prices. Consumer prices in the Scandinavian country rose by 9.3 percent year-on-year in June, compared to 9.7 percent in May. However, the median estimate for analysts was 9.0 percent, according to a Bloomberg survey. "In June, we saw increased prices in a few summer related services. For instance, package holidays, international flights and car rentals rose in price," Sofie Ohman, a statistician at Statistics Sweden, said in a statement. Prices on international flights in particular rose by 31.4 percent compared to June 2022, the agency said. — AFP

UK names investment zone

LONDON: The UK government has revealed that its first investment zone for advanced manufacturing will be in northern England, under its so-called "leveling up" policy to boost growth outside London. South Yorkshire, including Sheffield, Rotherham, Doncaster and Barnsley, will be the first of 12 planned investment zones and aims to support 8,000 jobs by 2030, said finance minister Jeremy Hunt. The scheme, first announced in Hunt's budget earlier this year, seeks to invest around universities and clusters of high-growth industries such as advanced manufacturing, life sciences or green industries. The South Yorkshire hub, which will feature the University of Sheffield and Sheffield Hallam University, will leverage more than £1.2 billion (\$1.6 billion) of private funding. "Our first investment zone is a shining example of how we will drive growth across the country," Hunt added. — AFP

JPMorgan's profits surge

NEW YORK: JPMorgan Chase reported a jump in second-quarter profits Friday on surging income tied to higher interest rates as executives described the US economy as "resilient" but facing risks. Profits were \$14.5 billion, up 67 percent from the year-ago period, while revenues were up 34 percent to \$41.3 billion. Chief Executive Jamie Dimon said consumers are still spending, but "slowly using up their cash buffers." The results were the first to include JPMorgan's acquisition of First Republic Bank under a government-orchestrated spring auction after the smaller lender suffered a fatal run on deposits. JPMorgan's earnings included a \$2.7 billion one-time "bargain purchase gain" on First Republic. But the acquisition also added to JPMorgan's credit costs in the quarter. — AFP

Nissan recalls vehicles

TOKYO: Automaker Nissan announced Friday the recall of 699,000 vehicles in Japan to address a range of defects that also affect more than 700,000 units overseas. The Japanese car manufacturer said the problems found in five models had not caused any accidents in Japan. A total of 699,000 units were affected in the country, with many having more than one fault, a spokeswoman for Nissan in Japan told AFP. The Japan recall includes 484,025 units of the Note, Serena and Kicks models over a defective engine hose cover which can lead to the hose cracking and preventing the vehicle from starting, the company said in a statement. It said 478,199 vehicles, including the Note, Note Aura, Serena, Leaf and Kicks, were being recalled for a faulty vehicle control program that in certain circumstances can cause acceleration after the cruise control is stopped. — AFP

165 million people fall into poverty

UNITED NATIONS: The COVID-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and the war in Ukraine have pushed 165 million people into poverty since 2020, the United Nations said, calling for a pause in debt repayments for developing countries. Because of these shocks, 75 million people will have fallen into extreme poverty, defined as living on less than \$2.15 a day, between 2020 and the end of 2023 — and 90 million more will fall below the poverty line of \$3.65 a day, according to a study published by the United Nations Development Program.

"The poorest suffer the most and their incomes in 2023 are projected to remain below pre-pandemic levels," the report said. "Countries that could invest in safety nets over the last three years have prevented a significant number of people from falling into poverty," UNDP chief Achim Steiner said in a statement. "In highly indebted countries, there is a correlation between high levels of debt, insufficient social spending, and an alarming increase in poverty rates."

The report called for a "debt-poverty pause" in economically struggling countries "to redirect debt repayment towards financing social expenditures and countering the effects of macroeconomic shocks." "The solution is not out of reach for the multilateral system," the report said. According to another UN report published on Wednesday, some



MADRID: A homeless person sleeps in a street of the centre of Madrid. — AFP

3.3 billion people, nearly half of humanity, live in countries that spend more on paying interest on debt than on education and health.

And developing countries, despite having lower levels of debt, are paying more interest, partly because of higher rates. According to the report, the annual cost of lifting the 165 million newly poor people out of poverty would be over US\$14 billion, or

0.009 percent of global output and a little less than 4 percent of total public external debt service in 2022 for developing economies. If the income losses among the already poor prior to the shocks are also included, the mitigation cost would reach some US\$107 billion, or 0.065 percent of the world's GDP and around a fourth of total external public debt service, the report's authors estimated. — AFP

Business

Crypto gets much-needed boost after SEC court loss

US arrests former head of bankrupt crypto platform Celsius

NEW YORK: Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies rose in value on Friday after the US Securities and Exchange Commission was handed a setback in its legal campaign against the hard-hit sector. The increases came after a federal judge in Manhattan partially dismissed the SEC's case against the creators of the XRP cryptocurrency, Ripple Labs, who were accused of marketing their currency without first registering it with the Wall Street regulator. The SEC has argued for years that certain digital currencies are financial securities, like stocks or bonds, and are therefore subject to its supervision as an investment product.

The crypto community rejects the argument bitterly and has struggled to withstand the increased scrutiny as well as a string of scandals and arrests of top figures in the sector. "There are still questions about how this applies to other tokens and whether the ruling will hold up, but for now, it's a huge win for the industry," said a note from financial advisor The Motley Fool. In a second day of gains, Ethereum was up 5.69 percent in the past 24 hours and Elon Musk-supported Dogecoin was up more than 7 percent.

Bitcoin, the main asset in the crypto space, was up 2.3 percent over the past 24 hours. Judge Analisa Torres ruled that this argument could not be upheld for individuals who bought XRP, although she agreed with the SEC regarding institutional investors. This ruling is a slap in the face for the SEC, which has changed tack in recent months and taken the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange platform, Binance, and the leading US player, Coinbase, to court.

Since 2020, a dozen industry participants have been targeted by the regulator, determined to clean up what the body's chairman, Gary Gensler, describes as the "wild west". The SEC's critics, including members of US Congress, accuse it of trying to impose

an old and inappropriate regulatory framework on a new technology. Coinbase gained nearly 25 percent over the session on Wall Street on Thursday though it dipped slightly on Friday.

In another development, US prosecutors arrested the former head of Celsius Network on fraud charges, a year after the cryptocurrency platform filed for bankruptcy protection while owing investors \$4.7 billion. A Justice Department indictment of Alexander Mashinsky listed seven criminal counts, including securities fraud, wire fraud and market manipulation. Mashinsky is accused of "orchestrating a scheme to defraud customers of Celsius through a series of false claims about the fundamental safety and security of the Celsius platform," said US Attorney Damian Williams of the southern district of New York state.

"Whether it's old-school fraud or some new-school crypto scheme, it doesn't matter one bit. It's all fraud to us," Williams said in a press release. "And we'll be here to catch it." Mashinsky, who was born in Ukraine before living in Israel and then the United States, faces decades of potential imprisonment, with each of the seven counts holding a maximum possible sentence of between five and 20 years. Mashinsky was arrested early Thursday and scheduled to be presented in court later in the day.

Authorities also charged Roni Cohen-Pavon, Celsius' former chief revenue officer, who is a Zionist citizen and is currently abroad. At its peak in late 2021, Celsius had more than one million clients and held more than \$25 billion in assets. But the company hit hard times in the spring of 2022 as the value of cryptocurrencies plummeted. Facing deep customer withdrawals, Celsius on June 12, 2022 froze customer accounts before filing for bankruptcy protection a month later.



MIAMI: A cryptocurrency ATM setup in a convenience store in Miami, Florida. — AFP

DOJ noted that in the days ahead of the June 2022 freeze on withdrawals, Mashinsky "continued to assure Celsius customers that Celsius was in a strong financial position and had sufficient liquidity to meet all customer withdrawal demands," according to an agency press release. But even as he made these statements, Mashinsky had removed approximately \$8 million of his own assets from the Celsius platform, the DOJ said. In a parallel case, the Federal Trade Commission

announced a settlement with Celsius that will permanently ban it from handling customer assets. Celsius also agreed to a judgment of \$4.7 billion, which will be suspended to allow Celsius to return its remaining assets to consumers in bankruptcy proceedings, the FTC said. The agency did not settle with Mashinsky and two other Celsius co-founders, Shlomi Daniel Leon and Hanoch Goldstein. A civil FTC case against these three will proceed in federal court, the FTC said. — AFP

Ukraine grain deal: Crucial, constantly threatened

ISTANBUL: The accord allowing for Ukrainian grain to be exported via the Black Sea, crucial in easing a global food crisis sparked by the Russian invasion, has been the subject of grueling talks to get Moscow to agree to its renewal. Set to expire late Monday, the deal brokered by the United Nations and Turkey, signed by Moscow and Kyiv in July 2022, established a protected sea corridor allowing Ukraine's agricultural goods to reach global markets.

Why is the deal at risk?

On July 4, Russia warned that it saw "no grounds" to extend the current deal, criticizing alleged obstacles to its own exports of agricultural products. Moscow had regularly threatened to quit the grain deal, complaining that secondary effects of Western restrictions on shipping and insurance as well as banks were blocking the export of its agricultural products. On Tuesday, Russia launched a series of drone attacks that targeted grain facilities at a Ukrainian port in the Odesa region which houses three maritime terminals key to exporting grain.

Can the deal be saved?

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who brokered the deal, has insisted that work on extending it continues with both Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky. "Mr Zelensky favors continuing the initiative, and Mr

Putin has some suggestions," Erdogan told reporters Wednesday at the end of a two-day NATO summit in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres supports removing hurdles to Russia exporting its fertilizers - another element of the July 2022 deal that Moscow has regularly complained is not being respected - due to Western sanctions blocking transactions by Russia's agricultural bank, his spokesman said. Guterres sent Putin a letter on the subject on Tuesday.

Has the deal worked?

By ensuring the security of maritime cargo traffic in the Black Sea - along with inspections to counter arms shipments - the deal has allowed the export of nearly 33 million tons since it entered force on August 1, 2022, mostly wheat and maize. The accord helped bring down prices that had shot higher following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and avoid hunger and famine in countries heavily dependent upon imports. China was the biggest importer at 7.75 metric tons, followed by Spain at 5.6 million tons and Turkey at 3.1 million tons, according to the coordination centre set up under the accord. The deal also enabled the World Food Program to provide 725,000 tons to countries experiencing crises like Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. "A lack of food supplies produces knock-on effects for the lives of millions of people, particularly the poorest," said the UN.

What is current situation?

Shipments have slowed ahead of the expiration of the deal, with only seven ships leaving the Ukrainian ports of Odesa and Chernomorsk between July 2 and 13. That was the average number which left daily last October. — AFP



CHORNOMORSK: A bulk carrier Negmar Cicek is loaded with grain in Black Sea port of Chornomorsk. — AFP

general practitioners and hospital consultants, said it was "appalled" at the move, as it would see migrants pay double to use the NHS. Most employees in the UK have National Insurance contributions deducted at source on their salaries, which pays for the National Health Service, as well as state pension and unemployment schemes. "Just like other workers, migrants contribute to NHS funding through general taxation. Doubling the NHS surcharge to over £1,200 (\$1,570) per year is an unjust additional penalty," Doctors in Unite said. "Migrants are effectively 'taxed twice' to access the same service," it added, calling the move "immoral and divisive".

The IHS, initially brought in to prevent "medical tourism", is now paid by most migrants under tighter post-Brexit entry rules. It is paid per person in addition to visa fees for stays of more than six months. Over-18s

pay £624 per year while students and under-18s pay £470 per year. The government has proposed raising the IHS for adults to £1,035, and £776 at the reduced rate. Work and visit visas will go up by 15 percent, while the cost of student and leave-to-remain visas among others will rise by at least 20 percent.

Net migration in the UK hit a record 606,000 in 2022, according to official figures released in May, heaping pressure on the government, which has pledged to cut dependency on foreign labor. Sunak has described legal immigration levels as "too high", and is separately battling record levels of asylum claims from migrants crossing the Channel in small boats. Critics warn the IHS increases - paid for by individuals or their companies - could worsen under-staffing in many sectors, and prompt high-skilled workers and students to go elsewhere. — AFP



BARCELONA: A visitor walks past a Nokia logo in Barcelona. — AFP

Ericsson, Nokia feel squeeze of rates hikes

STOCKHOLM: Interest rate hikes are forcing mobile operators to scale back investment in 5G networks, with equipment manufacturer Ericsson reporting Friday a rare net quarterly loss and Nokia lowering its outlook. Network equipment makers feel the pain when mobile phone operators scale back investment in 5G networks, with Ericsson reporting Friday a rare quarterly net loss and Nokia lowering its outlook. The news sent the shares of both companies down as much as nine percent on the Helsinki and Stockholm exchanges before trimming their losses.

Sweden's Ericsson posted a net loss of 600 million kronor (\$59 million) in the April through June quarter, compared to a profit of 4.7 billion kronor the same period last year. The dip into the red was mostly due to a restructuring charge of 3.1 billion kronor related to its announcement of 8,500 job cuts globally in February as part of a cost cutting plan, the company said. But it also posted an unexpected operational loss tied to a slowdown in purchases of its 5G mobile network equipment by operators in several countries, including the United States.

"We are confident that the market will recover" as three-quarters of base stations outside China have yet to be updated to 5G and "Ericsson is well positioned to benefit from increased investments," said chief executive Borje Ekholm in a statement. "The exact timing of these increased network investments is, of course, in the hands of our customers, but we expect that the market will see a gradual recovery in late 2023 and improve in 2024," he added. However Ericsson's Finnish rival Nokia wasn't as confident about a rebound in the second half of this year, as it lowered its outlook. "Customer spending plans are increasingly impacted by high inflation and rising interest rates along with some projects now slipping to 2024 - notably in North America," Nokia said in a statement Friday. The company said it now expected 2023 net sales to come in between - 4.0 percent and +2.0 percent, compared to its previous forecast of growth of between 2.0 and 8.0 percent. — AFP

UK immigration fee hikes face criticism

LONDON: The UK's oldest medical union on Saturday hit out at government plans to increase the amount migrant workers pay to use the state healthcare service, to cover public-sector wage increases. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government this week approved recommendations to boost wages of teachers, doctors and police by between 5.0 to 7.0 percent. Sunak ruled out tax increases or government borrowing to fund the rise but instead said hikes in the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) and visa fees would raise £1 billion.

Doctors in Unite, which represents junior doctors,

US banks caution on economy as Fed rate hikes boost earnings

NEW YORK: Results of large US banks released Friday underscored the boon from higher interest rates, as executives described the world's biggest economy as "resilient" but facing risks. JPMorgan Chase, Citi and Wells Fargo all enjoyed the benefits of being able to charge higher rates on credit cards and other loans, while not yet suffering as much of a hit from elevated interest payments to depositors. JPMorgan and Wells Fargo both reported huge increases in second-quarter profits while Citi experienced a drop, citing an anemic investment banking market as a drag on revenues.

Executives for the banks - which have extensive retail operations throughout the United States - described American households as still fairly healthy. But there are more signs of strain after a lengthy period of elevated inflation and the erosion of savings from pandemic fiscal programs. "We have seen payment rates start to come down a bit," Citi chief financial officer Mark Mason said of credit card payments, adding that the hit is greatest among consumers with low credit scores. Citi's base case is still for a "mild recession" in the US economy, Mason added.

At JPMorgan, profits for the quarter ending June 30 were \$14.5 billion, up 67 percent from the year-ago period, while revenues were up 34 percent to \$41.3 billion. Net interest income (NII), which accounts for the gap between revenues for higher interest rate charges on clients minus the hit from higher interest payments to depositors, jumped 44 percent to \$21.9 billion. The results were the first to include JPMorgan's acquisition of First Republic Bank under a government-orchestrated spring auction, after the smaller lender suffered a fatal run on deposits.

JPMorgan's earnings included a \$2.7 billion one-time "bargain purchase gain" on First Republic under a process that cost the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation about \$13 billion to cover the failed bank's losses. But the acquisition also added to JPMorgan's credit costs in the quarter. The bank added reserves of \$1.5 billion in case of bad loans. But excluding First Republic, this figure would have been \$326 million, JPMorgan said in its press release.

'Salient' risks

JPMorgan chief executive Jamie Dimon said consumers are still spending but are "slowly using up their cash buffers," as he expressed cautious optimism about the US economy. "The US economy continues to be resilient," Dimon said. "Consumer balance sheets remain healthy, and consumers are spending, albeit a little more slowly. Labor markets have softened somewhat, but job growth remains strong." Yet, there are still "salient risks in the immediate view," he added, noting issues including "stubbornly high" inflation, the Federal Reserve's unprecedented "quantitative tightening" policies and war in Ukraine.

At Wells Fargo, profits rose 57 percent to \$4.9 billion behind a big jump in NII. Revenues surged 20 percent to \$20.5 billion. The bank set aside \$949 million for credit losses, primarily for commercial real estate office loans, as well as for higher credit card loan balances. "While we haven't seen significant losses in our office portfolio to date, we are reserving for the weakness that we expect to play out in the market over time," said Wells Fargo chief executive Charlie Scharf.

At Citi, profits fell 36 percent to \$2.9 billion, while revenues dipped one percent to \$19.4 billion. Citi set aside \$151 million in reserves for credit losses, also citing the growth in credit card balances. Chief Executive Jane Fraser alluded to weakness in trading and investment banking as negative factors. "Markets revenues were down from a strong second quarter last year, as clients stood on the sidelines starting in April while the US debt limit played out," said Fraser, who also noted disappointing weakness in investment banking.

Business

Boom of micro-apartments in Brazil's most populated city

Young professionals attracted by modern properties close to jobs



SAO PAULO: Lara Maia, works in her 16-square-meter micro-apartment, in Sao Paulo downtown, Brazil.

SAO PAULO: Lara Maia types on her laptop perched on a small desk occupying a gap between the fridge and wardrobe in her micro-apartment in Sao Paulo, Latin America's most populated city. Behind her, the bed also serves as the couch. "I don't need any more: I'm close to everything and I feel free to leave whenever I want with a few bags," the 34-year-old computer scientist told AFP of the 16-square-meter (172-square-foot) apartment near downtown Sao Paulo.

Maia's space on the 16th floor that serves as her home and occasional office is an example of a growing trend of apartments the size of hotel rooms. Long a way of life in other large cities of the world, in Sao Paulo, Brazil's economic capital, the boom has been a recent one. From 2016 to 2022, available units up to 30 m2 soared

from 461 units to 16,261, according to the state housing association Secovi-SP. The number represents a fifth of all apartments in the city of 11.5 million residents.

Some, with furniture squeezed in as in a game of Tetris, or with the kitchen just inches from the bathroom, have become the subject of jokes on social media. But this has done nothing to dampen demand, mainly among adults aged 20 to 39, according to a survey by real estate firm Quinto Andar. "They are young professionals; middle and upper-middle class, at the start of their careers, mostly single, attracted by modern and well-located properties close to jobs or public transport," said Secovi-SP CEO Ely Wertheim.

Scaling down

Raised in a large house outside Sao

Paulo, Maia told AFP she could get a bigger apartment in another neighborhood for the same 2,300 reais (about \$475) she pays in monthly rent. But she is gladly giving up space to be closer to family and her job, present part of the time. At the end of a day working from home, Maia closes her laptop and prepares tea with toast in her only pan on an electric stove plate. Then she wheels a small table from under her work desk and sits down to eat. "In such a small space you learn to get rid of many things and to change your perception about what you need," she said.

Meetings with friends take place on the terrace - a shared area that has become common in new apartment buildings and offers laundry and games rooms, co-working spaces and even areas for bathing pets. Oscar Borghi,

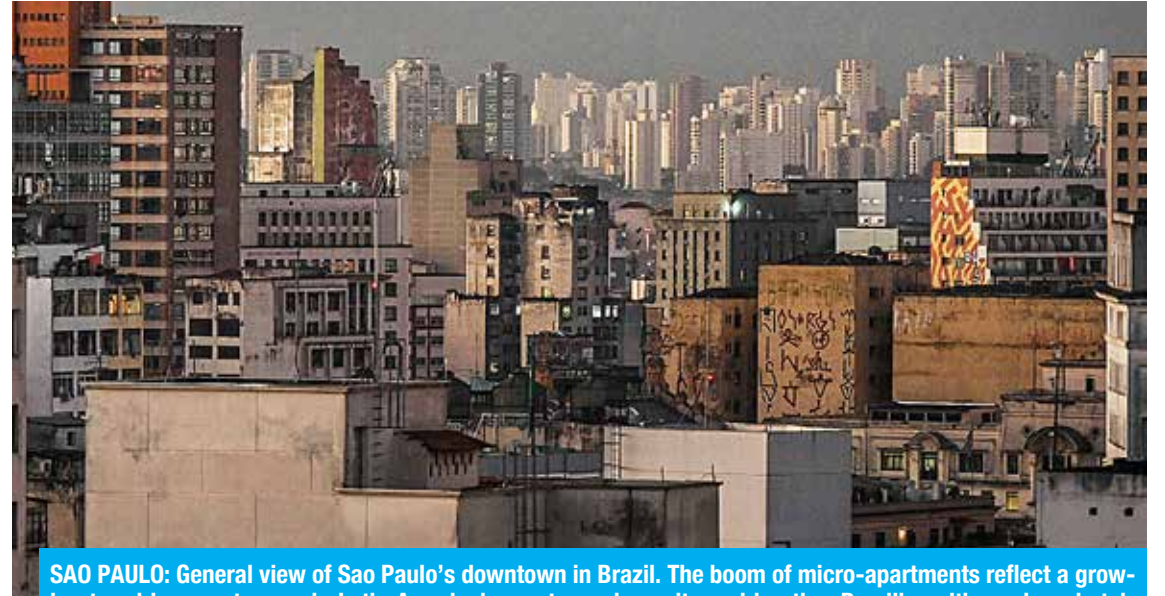
a 39-year-old engineer, has lived with his girlfriend since last year in a 28 m2 apartment with two rooms in the south of Sao Paulo, also near his work and a train station. "We thought it would be small, but we are comfortable with the layout and spaces of the building," he told AFP. "When we are both working from home at the same time, one of us goes to the coworking space" in the building.

Not cheap

Rodger Campos, an economist with estate agency Loft, said Sao Paulo, the fifth largest city in the world, was similar to other giant metropolises like New York or Tokyo, where micro-apartments abound: "It has a high population density, global connection, and is a center of work, health and education." The trend was

further helped by a sharp drop in interest rates from 6.75 percent in 2018 to about 2.0 percent in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, said Jose Armenio, who works in the city's urbanism secretariat.

This meant it was easier to buy small apartments for letting purposes. Another boost came from the city reducing tariff fees in 2014 for the construction of small apartments. The aim was accessible housing for less affluent people, in areas served by public transport. But the result has been the opposite. "Apartments of up to 30 m2 have the most expensive square meterage in the city", said Campos. The municipal council recently agreed to revise Sao Paulo's city planning, making micro-apartment construction more expensive in a bid to create more social family housing. — AFP



SAO PAULO: General view of Sao Paulo's downtown in Brazil. The boom of micro-apartments reflect a growing trend in recent years in Latin America's most populous city and in other Brazilian cities, where hotel-room-sized dwellings have multiplied. — AFP photos

Surprise growth helps Singapore avoid recession

SINGAPORE: Singapore's economy grew more than expected in the second quarter, data showed Friday, helping it avoid a recession, but analysts warned the trade-dependent city faced headwinds owing to weak overseas demand. The Southeast Asian nation's performance is often seen as a barometer of the global environment because of its reliance on international trade. Official data showed the economy expanded 0.3 percent quarter-on-quarter in April-June, having shrunk 0.4 percent in the previous three months. It had been tipped to contract 0.2 percent in a Bloomberg survey.

That meant it dodged falling into a technical recession, defined as two successive quarters of contraction. On a year-on-year basis the economy grew 0.7 percent, according to trade ministry estimates, after 0.4 percent expansion in January-March. The surprise reading came even as manufacturing, a pillar of the economy that covers key semiconductor exports, dropped 7.5 percent on-year, worsening from the 5.3 percent decline in the first quarter.

"The economy avoided a technical recession in the second quarter but we continue to expect growth to come in well below consensus this year as elevated interest rates and weaker external demand weigh heavily on economic output," research house Capital Economics said in an analysis. It noted, however, that the advance estimate is based on the data from the first two months of the quarter "and is often subject to large revisions". Selena Ling, chief economist at Singapore's OCBC Bank, said "the anticipated recovery in the global electronics industry, especially for semiconductors, appears to be delayed towards the fourth quarter... or even early 2024". — AFP

Global stocks mixed as Wall Street rally begins to tire

NEW YORK: World stock markets were mixed as a Wall Street rally showed signs of fatigue, despite solid bank earnings and improving inflation data. The European single currency meanwhile struck \$1.1248, the highest level since February 2022, and oil prices slid before the weekend. The US corporate earnings season entered full swing with big-hitting banks Citigroup, JPMorgan and Wells Fargo all reporting better-than-expected results or outlooks.

Their reports showed a lift from the industry's ability to charge higher rates on credit cards and other loans, while not yet suffering as much of a hit from elevated interest payments to depositors. But while JPMorgan and Wells Fargo both scored jumps in earnings, Citi's profits fell 36 percent to \$2.9 billion as it suffered due to weakness in its investment banking division. The broad-based S&P 500 closed at 4,505.42, down 0.1 percent for the day but up 2.4 percent for the week. After US stocks ended higher for four straight days, Friday's mixed session "should be expected," said Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investments. He considers the lackluster session the result of "a little bit of profit taking after a very strong rally." This week, traders welcomed more data showing falling US inflation, giving the Federal Reserve room to bring the curtain down on over a year of rate increases. — AFP



Gulf Bank announces Sharefa as the 20th AIDanah millionaire

KUWAIT: Following long moments of anticipation, amid a wide audience watching at the screens to discover the name of next millionaire, Gulf Bank has officially announced Sharefa Mohamad Ghloom Ashraf as this year's lucky winner of the semi-annual draw prize of KD 1 million, on Thursday, July 13, 2023. The draw was broadcasted live in a grand ceremony at the Avenues Mall - in the presence of representatives of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young - where the winner expressed her happiness for becoming the 20th millionaire in the history of the AIDanah millionaire account, and thanked Gulf Bank for always rewarding its customers.

On this occasion, Gulf Bank's General Manager of Consumer Banking, Mohammad Al-Qattan, said: "We congratulate Sharefa Mohamad Ghloom Ashraf, the semi-annual prize winner of the AIDanah millionaire account, and we wish the rest of the customers the best of luck in the upcoming draws. The deadline for qualifying and depositing to win the grand prize of KD 2 million is September 30, 2023."

Al-Qattan pointed that on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the AIDanah millionaire account, Gulf Bank recently decided to increase the value of the annual grand prize from KD 1 million to KD 2 million, thus, maintaining the prize's position as the world's largest cash prize associated with a bank. He further emphasized Gulf Bank's keenness to provide an exceptional and distinctive banking experience for customers - in parallel with its community role in rewarding savers with monthly, quarterly, semi-annual and annual draws - motivating them to save and encouraging others to follow their footsteps.

The year of savings

Gulf Bank's Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking, Najla Al-Eisa said: "Gulf Bank continues to initiate successful activities in 2023 - The Year of Savings - by celebrating winners like Sharefa Mohamad Ghloom Ashraf, who was announced as the 20th millionaire in the history of the AIDanah account." She added: "We were keen to create an atmosphere of celebration and excitement for those attending the semi-annual draw, by organizing various activities and distributing cash prizes to the participants - motivating and encouraging the public to adopt and promote a culture of saving."



Al-Eisa further stated that, "For the last 25 years, Gulf Bank has built strong relationships with customers through the AIDanah Millionaire Account. This falls in line with the bank's keenness to fulfill its community role in rewarding customers for their savings and encouraging a culture of saving - which is also part of consolidating the principles of sustainability in society."

The AIDanah account is one of the most rewarding savings accounts in Kuwait, with periodic draws that award valuable prizes and multiple benefits for account holders. Gulf Bank's AIDanah account offers monthly opportunities to win KD 1,000 to ten lucky winners, in addition to two quarterly draws with KD 100,000 prizes each, a semi-annual draw prize of KD 1 million and a grand draw prize of KD 2 million. It is worth mentioning that the last chance to deposit and participate in this annual grand draw is September 30, 2023.

Moreover, to enter the upcoming draws, Gulf Bank customers can open an AIDanah account at any time, and to increase their chances of winning, account holders must either maintain the minimum deposit amount of KD 200 or increase their AIDanah savings. The higher the balance in an account, the more chances get accumulated over time. Additionally, opening an AIDanah account is now easier than ever, with customers being able to open their accounts online through Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking services.

Numerous features

Gulf Bank's AIDanah Millionaire account is the only account that rewards customers for their loyalty - by transferring the chances of winning from the previous year to the next year - as part of a program that rewards customers for their loyalty to Gulf Bank. Accordingly, all chances gained by existing AIDanah clients in 2022 (from January 1 to December 31, 2022)

have been transferred and added to the 2023 chances, in accordance with the terms and conditions.

The AIDanah Millionaire account provides a multitude of valuable services to its customers, including access to an exclusive AIDanah ATM card, that is ideal for depositing money into their account, any time. Account holders can now also calculate their chances of winning the monthly, quarterly and annual draws using the AIDanah Calculator, available on Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking App.

To deposit into an AIDanah account, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's branches, or transfer directly through Gulf Bank's Online or Mobile Banking services. Customers can also direct their queries via WhatsApp on 1805805 for round-the-clock assistance from Gulf Bank representatives or call the Customer Contact Center on the same number. Additionally, customers can visit the dedicated AIDanah account website to learn more about the account and its winners.

Gulf Bank's vision is to be the leading Kuwaiti Bank of the Future. The Bank is constantly engaging and empowering its employees as part of an inclusive and diversified workplace in recognition of every employee's role in delivering customer excellence and serving the community at large. With its extensive network of branches and innovative digital services, Gulf Bank is able to give its customers the choice of how and where to conduct their banking transactions, all while ensuring a simple and seamless banking experience.

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

Lifestyle



A customer does her shopping in a REWE shopping supermarket bus delivering daily needs in the village of Lohne near Fritzlar, central Germany.



A customer chooses vegetables as she does her shopping outside the REWE shopping supermarket bus delivering daily needs in the village of Lohne near Fritzlar, central Germany.



A REWE employee connects a cable to get electricity for the REWE shopping supermarket bus delivering daily needs in the village of Lohne near Fritzlar, central Germany.

All aboard: Grocery bus caters to isolated German villages

In the western German village of Lohne, where the only grocery store closed its doors earlier this year, residents now do their food shopping on board a red-and-green supermarket bus that rolls into the main square once a week. For 90 minutes, locals get a chance to buy the essentials without having to get into a car to drive to the nearest store.



Customers do their shopping at a REWE shopping supermarket bus delivering daily needs in the village of Lohne near Fritzlar, central Germany.

The supermarket-on-wheels is a pilot project between Germany's third-largest food retailer, REWE, and the Deutsche Bahn rail and transport company. The bus began plying its route in March, catering to rural villages in the state of Hesse where brick-and-mortar stores have become an increasingly rare sight, turning some areas into so-called food deserts. For the roughly 600 inhabitants of Lohne, where the balconies are dot-



The REWE shopping supermarket bus delivering daily needs makes its way on a street to the village of Lohne near Fritzlar, central Germany.

ted with colorful geraniums, the arrival of the REWE shopping bus is a welcome sight after the village's only mini-mart closed for good in the spring. "I can get the basics here," said 90-year-old Inge Nehring, who rode her electric trike for three kilometers (1.8 miles) to join the weekly bus rendez-vous. "If I need something special, I go to a department store," she added. Parked on the village square, the 18-metre (60-foot) long bendy bus carries over 950 everyday products. Fresh fruit and vegetables are on display outside the bus, while inside the choice ranges from food items to cigarettes,

newspapers, soap and condoms. "The only things missing are nappies and wet wipes," said Yasmine Schneider, 34, who was shopping with her toddler Felix. The mobile supermarket has also become a popular meeting place, a chance for the often elderly residents to catch up while getting their weekly groceries. "After shopping, we sit on a bench and talk a bit," said 85-year-old Ursula Sauer, who lives alone.

Keeping villages connected

From Monday to Saturday, the supermarket bus covers a 600-kilometre route, stopping at 23 villages. The prices

on board "are the same" as in the REWE supermarkets, said Joern Berszinski, who manages the supermarket bus. Deutsche Bahn provides the driver for the project, while the onboard cashier is employed by REWE. Despite its appeal, it remains to be seen how profitable the bus service will be.

"It takes three years for a stationary shop to turn a profit, the bus could also take a few years," said Berszinski, who has run franchises under the REWE banner for 30 years. A key selling point for the mobile supermarket is that REWE can reach more customers with a single sales team.

"At a time when there's a shortage of skilled workers, that's an advantage," said Frank Klingenhoefer, in charge of mobility services at Deutsche Bahn Regio. The bus project has not gone unnoticed in Germany, where nearly 2,000 supermarkets of fewer than 400 square meters (4,300 square feet) have closed over the past decade, according to the EHI retail research group.



A customer does her shopping in a REWE shopping supermarket bus delivering daily needs in the village of Lohne near Fritzlar, central Germany.

"Many communities in other regions have expressed an interest," said Klingenhoefer. The REWE supermarket group plans to wait until the end of the pilot project in March 2025 before deciding whether to expand. Deutsche Bahn already has eight "medical buses" crisscrossing the countryside to tend to Germany's ageing population in remote areas. It also has plans for a bus offering banking services. Klingenhoefer said he could imagine services like shoe and clothing repairs on wheels as well, anything "where the needs of a single village are too small" to justify a brick-and-mortar investment. — AFP



A REWE shopping supermarket bus delivering daily needs is stationed at a place in Haddamar near Fritzlar, central Germany. — AFP photos



Customers do their shopping in a REWE shopping supermarket bus delivering daily needs in the village of Lohne near Fritzlar, central Germany.

Italy demands Louvre return looted antiquities

Italy has demanded the restitution of seven antiquities which it believes were looted before being sold by dealers to the Louvre in Paris in the 1980s and 90s, the museum said on Friday. The claim, first reported in Le Monde newspaper, was made in a letter handed over by Italian Culture Minister Gennaro Sangiuliano in February during a visit to France, a spokesperson for the museum said. All seven items, which include an amphora as well as ancient Greek vases ranging from the 4th-6th centuries BC, were sold by Italian traders convicted or suspected of trafficking in ancient artworks. "I consider that works of doubt-

ful provenance are a stain on the collections of the Louvre," the museum's president, Laurence des Cars, told Le Monde. "We should acknowledge and examine that with rigor and lucidity." An investigation has been launched into the disputed pieces which could lead to their return towards the end of the year. The Louvre, which is run by the French state, is the world's most visited museum and is home to some of Western civilization's most celebrated cultural heritage. A former director of the museum in Paris was charged last year with conspiring to hide the origin of archaeological treasures that investigators suspect were smuggled out of Egypt in the chaos of the Arab Spring. Jean-Luc Martinez, who ran the Paris Louvre from 2013 to 2021, is accused of turning a blind eye to fake certificates of origin for the pieces, a fraud thought to involve several other art experts. — AFP



'Stunning' cache of gold coins found in Kentucky cornfield

A trove of more than 700 gold coins dating back to the US Civil War found buried in a cornfield in the state of Kentucky is being put up for sale and is expected to reap millions. The "Great Kentucky Hoard" was discovered on a farm in the Bluegrass State earlier this year, according to the firm which graded the coins and the company selling them. The exact location of the find and the identity of the man who found the coins have not been revealed.

In a video posted on GovMint.com, which is selling the hoard, the man is seen digging up the coins in the dirt and heard saying "this is the most insane thing ever." GovMint.com said the coins were dated between 1840 and 1863 and include \$1 Gold Indians, \$10 Gold Libertys and \$20 Gold Libertys. Among them are 18 extremely rare \$20 Gold Libertys minted in 1863 in Philadelphia which GovMint.com said fetch six-figure sums from collectors.

"The importance of this discovery cannot be overstated," said Jeff Garrett, a rare coin dealer who was contacted by the anonymous finder several months ago. "The stunning number of over 700 gold dollars represents a virtual time capsule of Civil War-era coinage," Garrett said in a statement.

Kentucky adopted a neutral stance during the 1861-1865 Civil War between the slave-holding South and the North but was nevertheless drawn into the bloody conflict. "The Great Kentucky

Hoard may have been a result of this conflict, with the coins lost for over 150 years," said Numismatic Guaranty Company, which certified the coins. — AFP



This undated handout image shows an 1863 Gold Liberty coin, struck in 1863 at the "Mother Mint" in Philadelphia, which has been certified and graded by the Numismatic Guaranty Company (NGC). - AFP photos



This undated handout image shows a collection of US Gold Dollars in Type I, Type II, and Type III, with the date range of 1854-1862; \$10 Libertys with a date range of 1840-1862; \$20 Libertys dated between 1857 and 1862; and 1863-P \$20 Gold Liberty coins.

Lifestyle



A cinema employee checks a display showing a digital poster (right) for Oscar-winning animator Hayao Miyazaki's latest film, titled in English "How Do You Live?", on the first day of its premiere in Tokyo. - AFP photos



A man walks past a cinema displaying a digital poster (top right) for Oscar-winning animator Hayao Miyazaki's latest film, titled in English "How Do You Live?", on the first day of its premiere in Japan, along a street in Tokyo.



Merchandise for Oscar-winning animator Hayao Miyazaki's latest film is displayed for sale at a cinema.

Japan animator Miyazaki's first film in a decade released

Oscar-winning animator Hayao Miyazaki's highly-anticipated film — his first feature in a decade and probably his last — was released in Japan on Friday. The 82-year-old Miyazaki, co-founder of the celebrated anime house Ghibli, came out of retirement to make "How Do You Live?". It was years in production, with the studio taking the unusual step of keeping details about the plot tightly under wraps and offering minimal publicity.

The only clue about the storyline was a poster featuring a hand-drawn, bird-like creature with an eye nestled below its beak. "It was a very Ghibli-esque movie," university student Eisaku Kimura, 21, told AFP after watching a morning screening of the film in the trendy Shibuya district. "It's not like I felt anything special about it just because it was his last work, but I saw a lot of (Miyazaki) in the movie for sure, and it was exciting."

"How Do You Live?" was inspired by a 1937 book of the same title, but the studio said previously the movie would be entirely different. The film is about a boy who moves to the countryside with his father following the death of his mother. There, he meets a heron, who transports him to an alternate universe where the mystery of his mother's death slowly unravels. "It's such a crazy mixture of all the Ghibli movies I've seen before," Valeria Matveeva, an English teacher

from Russia, 30, told AFP.

"I think it takes the best of it, and I think it's kind of scary at times but it's also magical. Because there was no promotion, I had no idea what to think about it, but it was good." Miyazaki has built a cult following with his fantastical depictions of nature and machinery, and beloved characters like the cuddly forest spirit creature Totoro.

His film "Spirited Away," about a girl who gets lost in a mysterious world and

tries to save her parents, who are turned into pigs, won an Oscar for best animated feature in 2003. In 2013, Miyazaki said he would no longer make feature-length films, as he could not maintain the hectic intensity of his perfectionist approach to work. However, in an about-turn four years later, his production company said he was coming out of retirement to make what would be "his final film, considering his age." — AFP

Hollywood 'double strike': What it means

Hollywood's actors and writers will join forces on the picket line from Friday, after studios failed to reach a deal this week with the Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA). It is the first time that the two unions have been on strike simultaneously since 1960, when actor (and future US president) Ronald Reagan led the protests. What does this "double strike" mean for Tinseltown?

Will the big stars strike?

Among SAG-AFTRA's 160,000-strong ranks are many of the world's biggest stars. Hollywood's A-list, from Tom Cruise to Angelina Jolie to Johnny Depp, are card-carrying union members. Celebrities including Meryl Streep, Ben Stiller and Colin Farrell have come out publicly in favor of a strike. But will we see them on the picket lines? "There will be visibility from the big stars," said entertainment industry lawyer Jonathan Handel. "But this strike is not about bringing more money to people who already have millions."

Top stars do not stand to gain financially from the strike, because their agents negotiate individual contracts with studios that far exceed the union minimums being fought over. Still, their presence can "shine a light more on the studios, to come to the negotiating table with a fair deal," said actor Dominic Burgess.

How will it impact movies and shows?

Hollywood productions have already slowed down significantly since the writers' strike began in early May. Shows with finished scripts, such as "The Lord of the Rings: The Rings of Power," were able to continue filming this summer, though without any writers on set. But without actors, the only US-based productions that can continue are a handful of soap operas — which have a different contract — and reality and game shows.

For this reason, Fox this week unveiled a fall television schedule full of unscripted series such as "Kitchen Nightmares" and "Lego Masters." Movie releases are less immediately affected, because of the long lag between the end of filming and the start of screening in theaters. But the longer the strike goes on, the greater the impact on movie releases. Major Hollywood studios have already reshuffled their release calendars. For instance, Disney recently pushed back several Marvel superhero films, spreading

them out across a longer time period. SAG-AFTRA has suggested it could offer waivers to exempt smaller, truly independent films.

Will overseas productions be affected?

SAG-AFTRA is an American labor union, headquartered in Los Angeles. But that does not mean the impact of the strike will be confined to US borders. "When SAG-AFTRA actors are working on the movie being shot in Europe, or Australia, or Asia, or wherever, they will have to stop work," said Handel.

The strike also prevents members from promoting TV and motion pictures, meaning that premieres and important fall film festivals such as Venice and Toronto will be affected unless the strike ends. As things stand, "at the Venice Film Festival, if a picture was shot with SAG-AFTRA actors, the actors can't promote it," said Handel.

How long will the strike last?

Writers have already been manning the picket lines for 11 weeks. But historically, Hollywood strikes have varied wildly in length — from several months to just over three hours. So how long will this stoppage last? "That's up to them. We're open to talking to them tonight!" said a bullish SAG-AFTRA president Fran Drescher, at Thursday's press conference, referring to the studios.

"It's up to them if they're willing to talk in a normal way that honors what we do," she said. Handel predicted the strikes will last at least until the fall. "This is going to drag on, and is not easily resolved, because both sides view this as existential," he said. "There's a lot of bitterness between the writers and the studios, and the actors and the studios."

What is the economic impact?

From accounting to catering to transport, countless businesses are tied to the entertainment industry. That makes the financial impact of a Hollywood strike hard to calculate, but incontrovertibly enormous. "Fifteen years ago, when the writers were on strike — it was a 100-day strike — and the estimate was a little over \$2 billion. So that translates to \$20 million a day," said Handel.

Adjusted for inflation, that's close to \$30 million a day lost in California alone, he said. "Believe me, our heart bleeds that we had to make this decision," said Drescher. "But we can't not get what these members deserve, because it's only going to get worse. "This is where we drew the line in the sand and it's a terrible thing to have to do. But we were forced into it." — AFP



SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher (center left), with National Executive Director & Chief Negotiator, Duncan Crabtree-Ireland (center right) and actress Frances Fisher (center bottom), join Writers Guild members at a picket line outside Netflix in Los Angeles. - AFP

Striking actors join picket lines as Hollywood shuts down

Actors took to picket lines outside studio headquarters from California to New York on Friday as movie and television production ground to a halt in the most serious Hollywood strike in decades. Hundreds of strikers marched with placards at the Netflix building on Los Angeles' famed Sunset Boulevard, as well as at Disney, Paramount, Warner and Amazon premises, with passing drivers honking their horns in support.



The SAG-AFTRA building, home to the US labor union that represents film and television actors, singers, and other performers, is seen in Los Angeles, California.

In New York, Jason Sudeikis and Susan Sarandon were among A-listers who showed up for demonstrations, triggered by the refusal of studio bosses to meet actors' demands for better pay and job security. "The studios are tone-deaf and greedy, and they need to wake up — because we are the ones that made them rich," actress Frances Fisher, who starred in "Titanic," told AFP while marching outside Paramount Pictures.

Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) members joined writers who have been on strike for weeks, triggering the first industry-wide walkout for 63 years and effectively shutting down Hollywood. "We've been out here for about 80 days... The fact that SAG-AFTRA went on strike brought a lot of energy, and there's incredible solidarity," said "Friends" co-creator Marta Kauffman. The studios "look like the devil," she told AFP, at the picket line outside Netflix.

Actors formally went on strike at midnight Thursday after negotiations to reach a new deal with production studios ended without an agreement. The union's demands have focused on dwindling pay in the streaming era, and the threat posed by artificial intelligence.

"We're in this for the long haul, but this is a historic moment," said Vera Cherny, 44, who has had roles in "The Americans" and "For All Mankind." "It is time for us to lock down the contracts that are going to serve generations of actors to come. Just like they did in 1960."

Blockbusters delayed?

Protesters came out in force on both coasts for Friday's protests. In Manhat-

tan, 36-year-old actress Casey Killoran told AFP that actors are "just trying to make a minimum wage, a living wage in New York City. "We want to be able to live in the place that we work," she said.

But for now, the "double strike" has essentially shut down all US productions, with limited exceptions such as reality and game shows. TV shows that had continued to shoot amid the writer's strike, such as "Star Wars" series "Andor," will shut down.

Ongoing production of movies including superhero flick "Deadpool 3" and historical epic sequel "Gladiator 2" were also expected to shutter, and their release dates could be postponed if industrial action drags on. Actors are now prohibited from promoting some of the year's biggest movies, at the peak of the summer blockbuster season.

The A-list cast of Universal's "Oppenheimer," a much-hyped wartime biopic from Christopher Nolan, walked out of their London premiere on Thursday. SAG-AFTRA represents actors from mega-stars such as Tom Cruise to day-players who take small roles on television series. Top stars enjoy individual contracts with studios that far exceed the union minimums which are the focus of the actors' strike, but their presence on picket lines over the coming weeks could help draw attention to the dispute.

"We're part of an industry that has so many people that are front-facing, so that extra PR is gonna be helpful," said Tien Tran, star of sitcom "How I Met Your Father," who was picketing outside Paramount.

'Consent'

The last time the actors' union went on strike, in 1980 over the advent of pay television and home video, it lasted more than three months. This time, the union says actors' pay has been "severely eroded" by streaming and has warned that artificial intelligence poses "an existential threat." Ezra Knight, SAG-AFTRA New York local president, said AI "threatened to remove real performers from the creative space."

Studios "want to hold on to their right to take my likeness, in one production... and use that likeness in perpetuity forever," he warned. "We want limitations to that, we want consent and to be able to give permission for that." The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) says it had offered large pay raises and a "groundbreaking" AI proposal to actors. — AFP

Lisa Marie Presley's death linked to weight loss surgery

The death of Lisa Marie Presley, the singer-songwriter and only child of rock and roll legend Elvis, was caused by a bowel obstruction related to a prior weight loss surgery, medical examiners said. Presley, who led a tumultuous life in the sprawling shadow of her world-famous father, died in January at age 54 after being discovered unresponsive in her home and rushed to the hospital.

Her cause of death was determined to be "a small bowel obstruction caused by scar tissue that developed after a previous bariatric surgery years ago. The manner of death is natural," the County of Los Angeles Department of Medical Examiner said in a statement Thursday. Bariatric surgery is a stomach-shrinking bypass procedure carried out on those wanting to lose excessive weight.



In this file photo the late US singer and actress Lisa Marie Presley mingles with fans and signs autographs outside her father's Graceland mansion in Memphis, Tennessee. — AFP

Presley was found by her ex-husband on January 12, and pronounced dead later that afternoon, the medical examiner said. The ex-husband, Danny Keough, lived at her property in the celebrity-studded Los Angeles suburb of Calabasas. He performed CPR until paramedics arrived and transported her to hospital, where she was put in an induced coma on life support before dying, TMZ reported at the time.

In addition to Keough, whom she divorced in 1994, Presley had also been married to Nicolas Cage, Michael Jackson and actor-composer Michael Lockwood. Lisa Marie was Elvis' only child. She previously controlled Elvis Presley Enterprises, although she sold the bulk of shares in the company to a private equity firm in 2005.

She retained control of Graceland, the estate her father owned and where he was found unconscious in August 1977. Elvis' widow Priscilla Presley reached a settlement in May, following a dispute over an amendment removing her from her daughter's will. In addition to her mother, Lisa Marie Presley was survived by her daughter Riley Keough, who appeared in "Mad Max: Fury Road," as well as teenage twin daughters Harper and Finley. Her son Benjamin Keough died by suicide in 2020. — AFP



Members of the Writers Guild of America and the Screen Actors Guild walk a picket line outside NBC Universal in New York City. - AFP

Lifestyle

Twice a month, Noor Agha Faqiri lights up the kiln at his small workshop around 50 kilometers (30 miles) northwest of the Afghan capital to fire a fresh batch of pottery. Faqiri is one of dozens of potters in Qarya-e-Kulalan (potter's village) in the picturesque Istalif district, but many have ceased production since the Taliban's return to power in 2021 as the distressed economy has led to sales plummeting. Faqiri, however, is determined to carry on. "A business that your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents have worked on should not be let go because it is particularly blessed," the 53-year-old told AFP during a visit.



An Afghan child carries dried clay bowls at a traditionally run factory at Istalif district in northwest of Kabul province. - AFP photos

"My children are also looking at the family business and want to maintain it in any circumstances and prevent it from going under." Afghanistan has a centuries-old tradition of pottery across the country, but Istalif's reputation for craftsmanship and quality stands out. The main street of Qarya-e-Kulalan is lined with pottery shops, at least half shuttered because of a lack of business.

Scenic village

But those still open display a dazzling array of jugs, pots, bowls and plates glazed with an eye-catching turquoise, aquamarine and earth-brown finish. Most customers are day trippers from Kabul, who make the 90-minute drive to picnic in the hills or alongside the rivers surrounding the scenic village. But wholesale merchants also occasionally show up with bigger orders for hotels and guest houses across Afghanistan — and beyond.

"Previously, foreigners would come, and people from other provinces would come to see Istalif as it's one of the ancient, green places for tourism," said

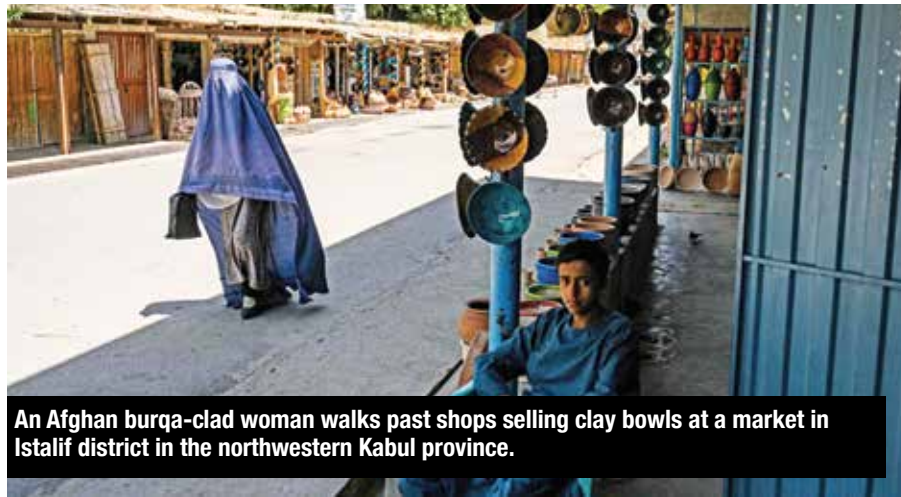


Afghan village potters keep centuries-old tradition alive

potter Abdul Hameed Mehran, 32. The pottery is still made the same way it has been for centuries. Clay from the surrounding mountains is thrown on wheels that are spun by the potter's feet as his hands deftly work. "The work that I do is a matter of pride for me," he says. "It is a source of pride for me that we make items like this in Afghanistan."

'Innovative work'

Mehran throws around 70 to 100 different pieces a day, depending on demand, which are then carefully stacked to part-dry naturally before the monthly bake. "I come here again and again because new items are always being



An Afghan burqa-clad woman walks past shops selling clay bowls at a market in Istalif district in the northwestern Kabul province.

made and they are good quality," said Shah Agha Azimi, 25, a customer from Kabul. "They are innovative in their work." Locals say only around 30 of 80 families involved in the business are still operating because of the economic downturn. Still, traditionalists such as Faqiri would welcome the competition. "When I see shops closing I feel heartbroken. I want every shop next to me to be open and our business to improve day by day," he said. "One would be happy seeing the trade in the market. One feels warmth in their heart while working." — AFP



An Afghan girl carries dried clay bowls at a traditionally run factory at Istalif district in northwest of Kabul province.



An Afghan vendor waits for customers at his shop selling clay bowls at a market.



Visitors walk past shops selling clay bowls at a market in Istalif district in the northwestern Kabul province.

Acropolis closes at hottest hours amid Greece heatwave

The Athens Acropolis, Greece's top tourist attraction, closed during the hottest hours on Friday and may well close again Saturday as the country wilts under a heatwave. Access to the UNESCO-listed archaeological site dating to antiquity is being suspended between midday and 5:00 pm (0900 GMT and 1400 GMT) before reopening "to protect workers and visitors", Culture Minister Lina Mendoni told public broadcaster ERT. "It's highly likely that we will take the same measure tomorrow (Saturday)," she said.

Temperatures reached 39 degrees Celsius (102 degrees Fahrenheit) in Athens on Friday, and parts of the country could see highs as much as 44 C on Saturday, according to the national weather service EMT. Other popular tourist sites



Visitors leave the Acropolis archaeological site in Athens.

surrounding the Sacred Rock on which the Acropolis stands, such as the Ancient Agora, have remained open.

The Acropolis, which has seen a major

rise in visitor numbers in recent months, is normally open from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm every day. Some tourists were left disappointed in front of the site's closed

entrance, saying the official website had not provided enough information. "I am not feeling really comfortable about it, but what can we do?" said Serbian human resources director Sonya Ivkovic, who planned to return for the reopening at 5:00 pm.

"We weren't expecting it, we just came and thought it would be open," Emelie Den, a doctor from Australia, told AFP. "Kind of caught us off guard but makes sense, it is really, really hot today... we've been drinking lots."

Fire risk

A summer heatwave is hitting several Mediterranean countries, with the mercury hitting 42C in parts of northern and western Greece on Friday. The authorities have in recent days taken measures

to help people cope. The Red Cross deployed at the Acropolis on Thursday to hand out water bottles and help visitors suffering from the heat. "We're going to hand out at least 30,000 50-cl bottles of water a day," the president of the Greek Red Cross, Antonios Avgerinos, told AFP.

Shelters were set up near the entrance at the start of the week to protect the thousands of sightseers who come to admire the Parthenon from the Acropolis. The authorities have warned about a greater risk of fires, particularly in regions where strong winds are expected. Greece suffered major wildfires in 2021 as an exceptionally intense heatwave gripped the country. — AFP



Tourists visit the Ancient Acropolis archaeological site in Athens as Greece hits high temperatures. — AFP photos



An employee closes the access gate to the Acropolis archaeological site in Athens.

Sports

'World watching' as Djokovic and Alcaraz clash for Wimbledon title

History and a generational shift at stake

LONDON: Novak Djokovic says the "world of sport" will be watching when he faces Carlos Alcaraz in a Wimbledon final where history and a generational shift are at stake. Djokovic is attempting to equal Roger Federer's record of eight titles at the All England Club and match Margaret Court's all-time mark of 24 Grand Slam crowns. Having already pocketed the Australian Open and French Open in 2023, victory on Sunday will put the 36-year-old just one major away from completing the first men's calendar Grand Slam since 1969.

"It's the ultimate showdown," said Djokovic, who will be playing in a record 35th Grand Slam final. "Everything comes down to one match. All eyes of the tennis and sports world will be directed on this Sunday's Wimbledon final. It's probably the most watched tennis match globally." At 20, Alcaraz is Djokovic's junior by 16 years. When Djokovic captured the first of his 23 majors at the 2008 Australian Open, the Spaniard was still three months shy of his fifth birthday.

Djokovic can become Wimbledon's oldest champion while Alcaraz is bidding to be its third youngest after Boris Becker and Bjorn Borg. "I obviously have more experience. It can help a little bit in some important moments, beginning the match, managing the nerves, managing the occasion, circumstances," said Djokovic. "But it's not going to be the deciding factor

really. Whoever, on a given day, is in a better state, mentally and physically, will be the winner."

Djokovic won the mind games when the pair clashed in the French Open semi-finals in June. Alcaraz suffered body cramping, a physical ailment brought on, he freely admitted, just by the sight of Djokovic on the other side of the net. "If you think how big he is, you struggle," admitted Italy's Jannik Sinner who was blown off court by Djokovic in Friday's semi-final. The memory of his Paris collapse is still raw for Alcaraz who plans a series of mental exercises to counter the tension on Sunday. "I'll try to forget that I'm going to play a final against Novak," he said.

'Best moment of my life'

Sunday will be Alcaraz's first Wimbledon final in just his fourth grass-court event. Djokovic is in his ninth championship match at the All England Club. The Serb has won 34 successive matches at the tournament and has not been beaten on Centre Court since losing the 2013 final to Andy Murray. "He's in great shape," Djokovic said of Alcaraz. "He's very motivated. He's young. He's hungry. I'm hungry, too, so let's have a feast."

Their progress to the final has been similar. Both have only lost two sets. They have spent virtually the same amount of time on court. "This is going to be the best moment of my life," said Alcaraz who aims to become the third Spanish men's champion after Manuel Santana in 1966 and Rafael Nadal, who won the title in 2008 and 2010. "Playing a final here in Wimbledon is something that I dream about when I start playing tennis. It's even better playing against Novak. It's going to be a really emotional moment for me. For Novak is one



Wimbledon 2023 men's final head-to-head stats, Carlos Alcaraz vs Novak Djokovic. — AFP

more day, one more moment," added Alcaraz who described Djokovic as a "legend" of tennis.

Alcaraz will likely enjoy most of the crowd support as All England Club fans, in common with most around the world, remain stoically ambivalent of Djokovic despite his status in the game. There were wild cheers when Alcaraz told a courtside TV inter-

viewer after his semi-final demolition of Daniil Medvedev that he believed he could beat Djokovic and that it was "no time to be afraid". Just hours earlier, Djokovic had feigned mock tears and cupped his ear in response to his pro-Sinner supporters. "All love. It's all love. All love and acceptance," he told reporters. — AFP

News in Brief

Kuwait athletes grab medals

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Essa Al-Zankawi on Saturday won the men's discus throw silver medal at the Asian Athletics Championships 2023 currently taking place in Thailand, finishing with a 60.23 m mark. On Friday, Kuwait's Yaqoub Al-Youha won the men's 110-meter hurdles bronze medal at the same tournament, finishing the race in 13.56 seconds. — Agencies

Rice confirms Hammers exit

LONDON: Declan Rice said his desire to play at the "very highest level" lay behind his decision to leave West Ham for Arsenal in a transfer that is set to make him the most expensive English footballer in history. The 24-year-old England midfielder explained on Saturday why he was leaving in an open letter to the club's fans. The Hammers also confirmed his exit on Saturday although London rivals Arsenal have still to confirm the deal, for a reported 105 million pounds (122.2 million euros, 137.5 million dollars) fee, has gone through. Rice's final act as a West Ham player was to become only the third captain in their history, behind England great Bobby Moore and club legend Billy Bonds, to lift a major trophy following last month's Europa Conference League victory over Fiorentina. West Ham tried to keep him but the lure of Champions League football at Arsenal proved too strong. — AFP

Langer replaces Flower

NEW DELHI: Former Australia coach Justin Langer has been appointed to replace Zimbabwe's ex-England coach Andy Flower at the helm of the Indian Premier League's Lucknow Super Giants, the team announced. The Lucknow franchise only made their debut in the world's most valuable cricket tournament two years ago and have finished in the top four in both their seasons. But Flower's two-year contract was not renewed, with the team tweeting a picture of him and the message: "Today it's farewell, but it'll never be goodbye because you'll always be one of our own. Thank you for everything!" That was quickly followed with the news of Langer's appointment, along with a photo of him in front of one of the oldest tea shops in the heart of the northern city. Langer said he was "thrilled" at the opportunity. — AFP

Glover grabs 2-shot lead

WASHINGTON: Lucas Glover, the 2009 US Open winner seeking his first title since 2021, closed with back-to-back birdies to keep the lead after Friday's second round of the PGA Barbasol Championship. Glover fired a four-under par 68 to stand on 13-under 131 after 36 holes at Keene Trace Golf Club course in Nicholasville, Kentucky. "It was a bit of a struggle," Glover said. "Uncharacteristically drove it very poorly. I just didn't hit enough fairways to hit the ball close and take it low again. Happy the way I finished and happy the way I rolled it, just not many of them were very close." It was good enough for a two-stroke lead over fellow American Adam Long, England's Daniel Brown and Sweden's Vincent Norrman with South Africans Jayden Schaper and Louis de Jager, Frenchman Adrien Saddier and American Ryan Moore on 134. — AFP

USA to host South Africa

WASHINGTON: The United States women's national team, which launches its bid for a third consecutive Women's World Cup crown next week, will play host to South Africa once it returns home. The US Soccer Federation announced Friday that the American women will play their first matches after the Women's World Cup against South Africa on September 21 at Cincinnati and September 24 at Chicago. Both South Africa and the Americans are competing in the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand, with the African squad there for the second time and the US women for the ninth. "The focus right now is of course on the World Cup, but to get two great matches in our first games back in the USA in two stadiums that are really fun to play in will be awesome," US head coach Vlatko Andonovski said. "South Africa has talented players so I'm sure these will be two entertaining games." — AFP

Birdie burst propels Park to LPGA lead; Corpuz in pursuit

WASHINGTON: Annie Park's eight birdies included a sizzling string of five in a row on Friday as the American seized a two-shot lead at the US LPGA Dana Open in Sylvania, Ohio. Park, whose lone LPGA victory came at the ShopRite Classic back in 2018, matched her career-low round with an eight-under 63 at Highland Meadows, her 11-under par total of 131 putting her two clear of a trio of players headed by newly crowned US Women's Open champion Allisen Corpuz. "I just had some really good shots out there," Park said. "Recovered well from bad shots. Overall I played really well today."

Park teed off on 10 and, after a birdie at 13, she put together five straight birdies from the 18th through the fourth. She added two more birdies at the seventh and eighth to separate herself atop a crowded leaderboard. Corpuz, who claimed her first major title at Pebble Beach on Sunday, produced her second bogey-free round of the week, firing a five-under par 66. She was joined on nine-under 133 by overnight co-leaders Jaravee Boonchant of Thailand and Linn Grant of Sweden, who both shot 69.

"Really solid past two days," Corpuz said, adding that any fatigue she was feeling in the wake of her triumphant Open campaign - and the travel delays that beset her afterward - might actually be working in her favor. "I think, honestly, the fatigue has kind of helped with the nerves a bit," she said. "Going out there (I'm) just focusing on doing the same thing - try and hit good shots." She said her grouping with former world number one Lydia Ko and two-time major winner Minjee Lee had been energizing. "I think it always helps to see good golf," Corpuz said.

Ko was impressed with Corpuz's ability to maintain her concentration. "I think tired is an understatement of probably how she is," the New Zealand-er said. "I'm sure everybody probably wants a piece of her and she probably hasn't had much time to herself. But she played great." Neither Jaravee nor Grant showed the sharpness that carried them to the first-round co-lead at seven-under on Thursday. Jaravee hit just seven of 14 fairways but was pleased that she was nevertheless able to hit 16 of 18



SYLVANIA: Annie Park of the United States plays her shot from the tenth tee during the second round of the Dana Open at Highland Meadows Golf Club in Sylvania, Ohio. — AFP

greens in regulation.

"Some of the putts didn't drop as I expected, but overall I'm still happy with how I played today," she said. Eight players shared fifth place on eight-under par 134. South Korean Lee5 Jeong-eun climbed into that group with a seven-under par 64 that featured an eagle,

six birdies and one bogey while former world number one Ariya Jutanugarn joined the group with a two-under 69. Ko and Lee were among another big bunch on seven-under par and 15-year-old Monday qualifier Mia Hammond posted her second straight three-under 68 to join a group at six-under. — AFP

Ashwin dismantles West Indies as India secure innings win

ROSEAU: Ravichandran Ashwin's seven-wicket second innings demolition job underlined his utter dominance of an inept West Indies team who crashed to defeat by an innings and 141 runs late on the third day of the first Test against India in Dominica on Friday. It was India's largest margin of victory in a Test match in the West Indies and maintains an unbeaten run spanning more than 21 years against these opponents going into the second and final Test starting next Thursday in Trinidad.

After Rohit Sharma declared the tourists' first innings closed at 421 for five, 40 minutes into the afternoon session, first day destroyers Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja wasted little time in adding to that first innings success to skittle the Caribbean team for 130 in just over 50 overs. Ashwin fittingly ended the match by trapping last man Jomel Warrican leg-before. His haul of 7-71 lifted his match figures to 12-131 - his eighth match haul of 10 wickets or more in Tests - while the support of Jadeja kept relentless pressure on a home side technically and temperamentally incapable of coping with such quality spin bowling on a helpful pitch.

Debutant Alick Athanaze was again the top scorer with 28 but his effort paled in comparison to his Indian counterpart as opening batsman Yashasvi Jaiswal led the way in India's only innings with a determined, dedicated innings of 171 which spanned more than eight hours and occupied 387 deliveries. That effort earned him the man of the match award notwithstanding the fantastic bowling figures of Ashwin. "This experience has been a special moment," said the 21-year-old left-hander. "I used to think about playing for my



ROSEAU: Kemar Roach (3rd right) of West Indies bowled by Ravichandran Ashwin (right) of India during day three of the First Test between West Indies and India at Windsor Park in Roseau, Dominica. — AFP

country when I was young. It is an emotional moment for me but this just the start."

'Let ourselves down'

For West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite, the emotions were the exact opposite on a forgettable day personally and for his team. "I didn't think it spun a lot early on, we just let ourselves down with the bat," said the opener, a comment which immediately raised a few eyebrows given how the pitch behaved virtually from the first session.

"Senior guys, starting with myself, have to lead the way. We have to use the bat more instead of our pads." As on day one, Brathwaite and opening partner Tagenarine Chan-

derpaul had to cope with spin just minutes into the start of the second innings and although he was dropped on nought Ashwin eventually put him out of his misery. He had missed a straightforward chance at short extra-cover in the morning offered by Virat Kohli off left-arm spinner Warrican.

Dropped at 40, Kohli went on to get 76 before falling to Rahkeem Cornwall just after lunch. The burly off-spinner was only allowed to bowl after the morning period because of time spent off the field on the first day when he was unwell. Earlier, West Indies finally prised out Jaiswal and added the wicket of Ajinkya Rahane pre-lunch. Jaiswal was finally undone by the extra pace and bounce extracted by fast bowler Alzarri Joseph in edging a catch to wicketkeeper Joshua da Silva after an hour's play. — AFP

Jamaica hope to defy 'disorganization' to pull off WCup upset

MIAMI: Jamaica must put rows with their federation behind them and get star striker Khadja Shaw firing if they are to win a match at the Women's World Cup for the first time. The disputes, which became very public, emerged after frustration over a lack of friendly games in the

build-up to the tournament that begins next week in Australia and New Zealand. The team did though go to a training camp in Amsterdam as they prepare for their second straight World Cup appearance and have received some late assistance from corporate backers.

The Reggae Girlz made their tournament debut in France four years ago and, placed in a tough group, returned home after three defeats. The losses to Brazil, Italy and Australia, all with longer histories in the women's game and greater re-

sources, were no disgrace and there are signs that the Caribbean team could do better this time despite the turbulence.

Jamaica face Brazil, France and CONCACAF rivals Panama in another demanding World Cup group. Much of the inspiration for the optimism has been generated by Shaw, who was voted player of the year in the CONCACAF region having struck 55 goals in 38 appearances for her country.

The biggest star to emerge from the women's game in the Caribbean,

Shaw plays in England's Women's Super League and has scored 31 goals in 30 games in all competitions for Manchester City.

"I'm not surprised she's doing what she is doing and she still has so many levels to go to, which is quite frightening to be honest," said her City team-mate, the England defender Alex Greenwood. "I think she can be the best in the world if she wants to be." The Jamaica squad is drawn from European and North American-based players. — AFP

Sports

Confusion over launch date for African Football League

8-team first edition to kick off Oct 21: CAF website

JOHANNESBURG: CAF confirmed at a meeting of their top officials in Abidjan that the African Football League would kick off in October, but there is confusion over the starting date. FIFA president Gianni Infantino, a guest speaker in the Ivory Coast commercial capital, said the eagerly awaited debut of the club competition would be on Friday, October 20. But the official CAF website said the eight-team first edition would kick off one day later, on Saturday, October 21.

The African Football League is the new name for what was launched last year in Tanzania as the CAF Africa Super League. CAF president Patrice Motsepe told South African public broadcaster SABC in June that the name change was necessary because some major sponsors had a problem with the original title. "Some sponsors say the history of the Super League in Europe was not good and if you associate the name 'super' with a football competition, it has negative connotations," said Motsepe.

Speaking more recently to Qatar-based BeIN Sport, the CAF president said: "Our friends in Europe advised us not to use the expression 'super league'." "(They based this advice on) negative associations with the recent failed attempt in European football." A planned European Super League collapsed within 48 hours in 2021 after a backlash from fans, governments and players, which forced nine of the 12 teams who signed up to pull out. The founding members were Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur, AC Milan, Inter Milan, Juventus, Atletico Madrid, Barcelona and Real Madrid.

Little known

Infantino has repeatedly stressed that the situation in Africa is different from Europe with the African League backed by FIFA and CAF. Three months before the competition begins, little is known about it beyond the name change, an October 20 or 21 kick-off and a field reduced from 24 clubs to eight that have not been named.

AFP understands the line-up will include 2023 CAF Champions League winners Al Ahly of Egypt, runners-up Wydad Casablanca of Morocco and semi-finalists Mamelodi Sundowns of South Africa and Esperance of Tunisia. The other entrants could be recently crowned Nigerian champions Enyimba, 11-time CAF title winners TP Mazembe of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Petro Luanda of Angola and Simba of Tanzania.

"There will be eight great teams, which will be followed in the future with a bigger version. We have to invest in African club football as well as national team football," said Infantino. "It is our responsibility, duty and task, and with the work and contributions of all of us as a team, we will succeed." CAF have said that their main annual competitions before the African Football League launches - the Champions League and Confederation Cup - will continue.

Delegates to the Abidjan meeting heard that CAF



ABIDJAN: FIFA president Gianni Infantino (left) speaks during CAF 45th Ordinary General Assembly in Ivory Coast. — AFP

commercial revenue rose 17 percent to \$125 million (€111 mn) in the past financial year thanks to media rights and sponsorship increases. The Cairo-based organization are hoping for a major revenue boost next year as their biggest money-spinner, the Africa

Cup of Nations, will be staged in the Ivory Coast from January 13. Defending champions Senegal are among 15 nations who have secured places and the other nine will be known in September when the final qualifiers are played. — AFP

Panama present tough final test for Lozano's Mexico

LOS ANGELES: Mexico are aiming for a record-extending ninth CONCACAF Gold Cup title when they face Panama in Sunday's final at SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles and a victory would be particularly sweet for interim coach Jaime Lozano. Lozano, known to fans of El Tri as 'Jimmy', was handed the reins of the team for this tournament after Argentine Diego Cocca was fired following a disappointing Nations League campaign.

In the semi-final last month, Mexico lost 3-0 in Las Vegas to the United States after one of their worst performances against their rival in recent memory. Although they went on to beat Panama in the third-place game, that win was not enough to convince Mexican Football Federation president Carlos Rodriguez, who sacked Cocca the following day.

Lozano was put in charge as a stop-gap for the Gold Cup and given what was, on paper, a weaker team to work with. But the performances in the tournament have led many pundits to suggest he should be handed the job on a permanent basis. "I came to win the Gold Cup and that's the only thing on my mind," Lozano said after his team's impressive 3-0 win over Jamaica in Wednesday's semifinal — back in Vegas.

The 44-year-old former UNAM Pumas player has side-stepped questions over his future despite four wins in five games in the tournament. "We are going



SAN DIEGO: Adalberto Carrasquilla #8 of Panama battles for the ball with Bryan Reynolds #5 of the United States during the 2023 CONCACAF Gold Cup Semifinals at Snapdragon Stadium. — AFP

step by step and now comes the most important game. We will do everything possible to bring the Cup back home," he said. "I have enjoyed it a lot. I am truly very grateful for the opportunity, for what I have had to be

with this national team and with these players", added Lozano. At the very least, Lozano will be considered as a serious option with a team that looked demoralized now buzzing with positivity. — AFP

every two years and has its final on Sunday in Los Angeles, features national teams from North and Central America and the Caribbean. "We've already entered into discussions with FIFA, with both our competition teams, to ensure that there's a synergy between a calendar, routing of stadiums and kick-off times so that it's a win-win for each event, but also a win-win for the fans," Montagliani said.

"There could be an overlap. It won't be identical (times), but there could be an overlap, as has happened in the past between other tournaments. But I think an overlap is fine," added the Canadian head of the regional governing body. Venues are unlikely to be a problem for either tournament with a number of NFL stadiums already in regular use for international games along with MLS grounds.

The time difference between East Coast and West Coast could also help ease the conflict between the

two tournaments, although their could yet be issues around player availability. Montagliani said that off-days for each tournament allows some leeway. "You might have some overlaps in the group stage. (We have to) make sure our kickoff times are coordinated. If you do it right, it'll work. It's up to us and FIFA to make sure it works and our teams work well together and I have no issues. We're in those discussions already," he said.

While many of the qualification slots remain to be decided, the Club World Cup will feature the likes of Real Madrid, Manchester City, Chelsea, Brazilian clubs Flamengo and Palmeiras, Mexican team Leon and Seattle Sounders from Major League Soccer. FIFA decided in February that the new competition will feature 12 teams from Europe, six from South America and four representatives each from Asia, Africa and CONCACAF. — AFP

Barcelona teenager the Dragoni face of new era at WCup

MILAN: Next week's World Cup marks the dawn of a new era for Italy's women with teenage Barcelona midfielder Giulia Dragoni the exciting face of a fresh chapter. Long-time captain Sara Gama, 34, was left out of Milena Bertolini's squad as the Italy coach made space for emerging talent. Dragoni booked her spot on the plane to Australia and New Zealand after impressing on her debut aged 16 as a substitute in a recent goalless draw with Morocco.

The youngster is unlikely to start given the stiff competition in a midfield led by Manuela Giugliano, but she could well play a part as Italy try to show that they are better than their dismal display at Euro 2022. Italy surprised by reaching the quarter-finals of the last World Cup - their first for two decades - but finished bottom of their group with one point at the Euro in England.

Dragoni was picked alongside another young gun in Fiorentina's 19-year-old Emma Severini, in a squad which features 15 players from Juventus and newly crowned Italian champions Roma. Dragoni, who played in mixed-sex football until she was 13 and earned herself the nickname "Little Messi", is a star in the making. After leaving Inter Milan in January she scored four goals in 10 appearances as Barcelona's B team won the second-tier title, while also being part of the first-team squad which won the Champions League.

"Since September we've begun to try out new things and bring in new players," said Bertolini. "We don't want to be restricted to just one style of play because the team needs to be able to adapt depending on who they are facing." Italy's current standing in the women's game is reflected in Bertolini's stated objective for the World Cup - to get out of a group which also contains Sweden, Argentina and South Africa and see how things go from there.

Italian women's football has come a long way in the six years since Bertolini took charge of the national team but the country still lags behind European rivals England, Germany, France and Spain, never mind reigning world champions the United States. One of the keys to Italy's climb up to 16th in the world rankings was Gama, but she was dropped last month, her time as captain and spiritual leader of the national team seemingly over. — AFP

FIFA's New Club World Cup could overlap with CONCACAF Gold Cup

MIAMI: FIFA's new Club World Cup, which will be held in the United States in 2025, could "overlap" with CONCACAF Gold Cup being held in the same country, CONCACAF president Victor Montagliani said on Friday. Montagliani, who is also a FIFA vice-president, told AFP in an interview that talks were already under way between the two bodies to avoid clashes of kick-off times and other potential headaches.

FIFA announced last month that their new-look, expanded 32-team Club World Cup would debut in the United States in 2025. The Gold Cup, which is held

Classifieds

Change of Name

I, **Abbas Ali**, holder of Indian Passport No. P7118093, having permanent address 14, Gali G, Kharol Colony, Fatehpura, Girwa, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India-313001, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as **Abbas Ali** (given name) and **Hita** (surname). (C#3830) 14/07/2023

I, **Zarina Abbas Ali**, holder of Indian Passport No. S5547730, having permanent address 14, Gali G, Kharol Colony, Fatehpura, Girwa, Udaipur, Rajasthan, India-313001, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby de-

clare that henceforth my name will be read as **Zarina** (given name) and **Hita** (surname). (C#3830) 14/07/2023

I, **RATNAN GOVINDU PASPELETI** holder of Passport No. L1167437 do hereby change my name to PASUPULETI VENKATA RATHNAM (as given name) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name **PASUPULETI VENKATA RATHNAM** and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. 14/07/2023

I, **Santosh**, holder of Indian Passport No. L3857518, do

hereby change my name to **Santosh** (as given Name) and **Panchal** (as surname) for all purposes. I will henceforth be known in the name **Santosh Panchal** and I also undertake to carry out this name change in all my documents. (C#3829) 13/07/2023

I, **Abu Waquase**, (Given Name) holding Indian Passport No. T1936751 issued at Kuwait on 31/12/2018 hereby announce to change my name as **Abu Waquase** (Given Name) and **Siddique** (surname) for all purposes. (C#3828) 13/07/2023

Indian Restaurant in Fahaheel for sale

PLEASE CONTACT **66578139**

For labor related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128



Embassy of India
Kuwait

TENDER No. - KUW/ADM/861/03/2012

DATED-16th JULY 2023

TENDER NOTICE FOR CONTRACTOR FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF GARDEN IN THE EMBASSY

Embassy of India, Kuwait invites bids from interested companies for maintenance of garden in the Embassy.

Prospective / Interested companies are advised to inspect the area and present their offers in two sealed covers (Technical & Financial) marked "Offer for maintenance of the garden in the Embassy- to be opened by addressee only" and addressed to the "Head of Chancery, Embassy of India, Diplomatic Enclave, Arabian Gulf Street, Safat 13015, Kuwait." The bid must be submitted at the Embassy on or before 06th August 2023.

The detailed tender document along with its scope of work may be downloaded from Central Procurement Portal <https://eprocure.gov.in/cppp/> and also the official website of the Embassy of India, Kuwait from <https://indembktw.gov.in/tender-kuwait-in-india.php>. (scan QR)



For any other clarification please contact Mr. S. James Jacob, Administrative Attache on any working day (Sunday - Thursday) between 0800 hrs 1630 hrs on +96522513498 or email to: admnkuwait@mea.gov.in.

Automated enquiry about the Civild card is 1889988

Vondrousova wins Wimbledon title

Unseeded Czech stuns tearful Jabeur



WIMBLEDON: Czech Republic's Marketa Vondrousova celebrates with the Venus Rosewater Dish trophy during the prize ceremony after winning the women's singles final tennis match against Tunisia's Ons Jabeur (inset) on the thirteenth day of the 2023 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on July 15, 2023. — AFP

LONDON: Marketa Vondrousova became the first unseeded woman to win Wimbledon in the Open era as the Czech swept to a shock 6-4, 6-4 victory over Tunisia's Ons Jabeur in Saturday's final. As the first unseeded woman in the Wimbledon final in 60 years, Vondrousova was a heavy underdog against sixth-ranked Jabeur. But the 24-year-old upset the odds on Centre Court to win her maiden Grand Slam title at the second attempt after losing to Ash Barty in the 2019 French Open final.

"After everything I've been through - I had a cast on this time last year - and now I can't believe I'm holding this trophy," said Vondrousova who was sidelined with a wrist injury in 2022. "I don't know what's happening now." Vondrousova joins Jana Novotna and Petra Kvitova as the only Czech women to win a Wimbledon title. She is just the ninth unseeded champion at a Grand Slam tournament. Vondrousova's triumph completed a remarkable comeback after a rash of injuries stalled her promising career. Just 12

months ago, she was an injured bystander at Wimbledon, reduced to watching her best friend Miriam Kolodziejova attempt to qualify for the main draw.

Vondrousova's second wrist surgery had ruled the Olympic silver medalist out for six months, although her absence from the tour at least allowed her the space and time to get married. She was the second-lowest ranked player to reach the Wimbledon final - only Serena Williams in 2018 was lower at 181. So unexpected was her run that she told her husband Stepan Simek to stay at home in Prague to look after their cat Frankie until the final, when a pet sitter was found to allow her partner to make the trip to Wimbledon.

The defeat was another heartbreaking blow for world number six Jabeur, who wept during an emotional post-match trophy presentation. Jabeur was the first Arab woman to reach a Grand Slam final last year at Wimbledon, but losing to Elena Rybakina in three sets took the shine off that achievement. She

endured more misery just weeks later when she lost to Iga Swiatek in the US Open final. "It's going to be a tough day but I am not going to give up," she said while wiping away her tears. "It's the most painful loss of my career, but we're going to make it one day, I promise you I'm not going to give up."

Ice-cool Vondrousova

Jabeur's bid to become the first African and Arab woman to win a Grand Slam singles title has ended in bitter failure once again. Even for a player known as the 'Minister of Happiness', Jabeur's positive personality will be tested by her latest disappointment. She fell well short of the standards shown in victories over four former Grand Slam champions on her way to the final.

Jabeur had already lost twice in 2023 to Vondrousova, at the Australian Open and in Miami, and she had no answer to the big-hitting left-hander despite the support of 15,000 partisan fans on Centre

Court. Under the closed roof, Jabeur drew first blood with a break in the second game when Vondrousova netted a nervous backhand. But she immediately surrendered the initiative as Vondrousova broke back in the next game. Jabeur's anxiety was clear as her unforced error total reached double figures in another wild game that gave Vondrousova a 5-4 advantage that she gratefully seized to serve out the set.

Vondrousova made it five games in a row when Jabeur's weak forehand gifted her a break in the opening game of the second set. Breaking twice in three games, Jabeur moved 3-1 up, only to falter again as the ninth break of the match allowed Vondrousova back into the set. It was an opportunity the Czech was not going to spurn as Jabeur's unforced errors reached 31 by the final game. In contrast to Jabeur's meltdown, Vondrousova remained ice-cool and sealed her unexpected triumph with a perfect volley before falling to the turf in delight. — AFP

Last-gasp try as Argentina upset Australia 34-31

SYDNEY: Juan Martin Gonzalez scored a last-minute try as Argentina clocked back-to-back victories over the Wallabies for the first time Saturday, in a stirring 34-31 win to ramp up pressure on Australia coach Eddie Jones. The home side streaked into a 10-0 lead at Sydney's Parramatta Stadium, but Los Pumas won the next 17 points to take control and held their nerve to finish in style for a confidence-boosting victory ahead of the World Cup.

Both sides ran in four tries in the thrilling Rugby Championship arm-wrestle, with a single penalty making the difference. The home side thought they had won it when Mark Nawaqanitawase ran the length of the pitch for an intercept try with four minutes left. But the visitors never gave in, with Gonzalez flopping over in the final minute from a roll-

ing maul. "We need to enjoy this win because we worked really hard over the week and bounced back from a tough game (against New Zealand last week)," said Argentina skipper Julian Montoya. "We want to be fighting for every ball, every metre and every contact."

Argentina beat the Wallabies 48-17 last year in Mendoza and, while the scoreline in Sydney was not as emphatic, it was history-making as the first time they have gone back-to-back. The victory gave coach Michael Cheika breathing room after they slumped 41-12 to a clinical New Zealand in the competition's opening weekend, and he was ecstatic. "I thought we deserved to win the game," he said. "Australia were really good but I thought we just managed things well. I'm really, really happy."

While he was encouraged, the Wallabies are in disarray. After being blown off the park 43-12 by the Springboks in Jones' first game in charge at Pretoria - a result Australian media blasted as "an embarrassment" - they again misfired. Jones, in his second spell with Australia having led them to the 2003 World Cup final, insisted during the week the team was a work in progress.

While they were better in the scrum and lineout, discipline was again a problem with 14 penalties conceded. "Ill-discipline really hurt us tonight again. Yellow card, a couple of penalties put us at the wrong end of the field," said Australia captain James Slipper. "You can't win Test matches playing that sort of rugby. We've got to turn that around."

Los Pumas made a fast start and should have scored first, but Emiliano Boffelli fluffed an easy penalty. Instead, the home team pounced with Len Ikitau barrelling over in the corner after a looping pass from Quade Cooper found Marika Koroibete who palmed it off to the flying centre. Cooper slotted a difficult conversion then nailed a penalty to extend their lead to 10-0 inside 12 minutes. Ikitau took a blow to the shoulder while scoring the try and left the field. He was later seen in a sling. Unperturbed, a patient Argentina began stringing phases together and got off the mark after 20 minutes with Boffelli this time making no mistake with a kick under the posts. They kept the pressure on and a try soon followed after a nine-phase build-up ended with centre Jeronimo de la Fuente finishing the move and Boffelli adding the extras.



SYDNEY: Argentina's captain Julian Montoya (center) celebrates the winning Puma Trophy with teammates after the Rugby Championship match between Argentina and Australia at Commbank Stadium in Sydney on July 15, 2023. — AFP

The Wallabies soaked up huge pressure to go to the break at level-pegging, but started the second half without lock Richie Arnold who was sin-binned for an

infringement. It proved costly with Montoya barging over for Argentina, culminating a wave of attacks to put them in front for the first time. — AFP

France win 3rd straight world U20 rugby title

JOHANNESBURG: France matched a record and settled a score as they crushed Ireland 50-14 on Friday to win the World Rugby under-20 Championship at Ath-

lone Stadium in Cape Town. The French became only the second team after New Zealand to win the tournament three consecutive times, and they avenged a Six Nations under-20 Championship loss in Ireland this year. Losing in Cork cost France the European title, but they are now world champions after outscoring brave but outclassed Ireland by seven tries to two. "It was an incredible performance and it will take some time to realize that we are world champions again," France captain and flanker Lenni Nouchi told AFP.

Ireland skipper and hooker Gus McCarthy admit-

ted that his side "struggled in the line-outs, but I am proud of the boys. All credit to a great French team." Ireland led twice in the opening half before France took a 17-14 half-time advantage through a try from prop Lino Julien. The Irish suffered what proved a huge blow just before the break when prop Paddy McCarthy was yellow-carded. France took advantage of the numerical advantage to score early second-half tries from hooker Pierre Jouvain and centre Nicolas Depoortere with fly-half Hugo Reus converting both.

The defending champions had a 31-14 lead and

there was no way back for Ireland, who developed several multi-phase attacks only for France to execute turnovers. France were masters at turning defense into attack and as Ireland faded in the closing stages, the champions scored three more tries. Full-back Mathis Ferte (two), Julien, Jouvain, Depoortere, Nouchi and winger Leo Drouet scored tries for France and Reus kicked six conversions and a penalty from nine shots at goal. Scrum-half Fintan Gunne and centre John Devine were the try scorers for Ireland and fly-half Sam Prendergast converted both. — AFP