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KUWAIT CHARTS ITS FUTURE

- 107 major projects listed in govt's 4-year program
- Focus on economic, energy, social developments

- Residency law to be revised, expat numbers to be cut
- Assembly panel scraps local agents for foreign firms

NEWS IN BRIEF



DAMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad meets Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani on July 16, 2023. — AFP

Iraqi PM visits Syria to bolster ties

DAMASCUS: Syria and Iraq on Sunday said they would step up efforts to fight terrorism and reinforce cooperation in several sectors, as Damascus recovers its place in the Arab world. Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad hosted Iraqi Prime Minister Mohamed Shia Al-Sudani for talks in Damascus, where they discussed "reinforcing cooperation between the two countries in various sectors". — AFP

Captagon lab found in Iraq

BAGHDAD: Iraq said Sunday it has found a site in the southern province of Muthanna bordering Saudi Arabia where Captagon is produced, a rare discovery in a country that has become a transit route for the illicit drug. The interior ministry did not announce any arrests but said the site contained machines capable of producing Captagon pills as well as 27.5 kg of raw materials. — AFP

Iran relaunches hijab patrols

TEHRAN: Iranian police on Sunday relaunch patrols to catch the increasing number of women leaving their hair uncovered in public in defiance of a strict dress code, state media reported. Online images have shown female police officers, clad in all-black chadors, berating and arresting women whose heads were uncovered. Offenders face fines or prison terms of up to two months. But reformist newspaper Shargh reported on Sunday that four women have received additional punishment including attending "psychological classes" and driving bans. — AFP

5 jailed over Jordan leak

AMMAN: A Jordanian court Sunday sentenced five people to three years in jail for a gas leak in the port of Aqaba last year that left 13 dead, a judicial source said. The source said a court in Aqaba convicted the heads of operations at the state-owned port and at the public safety department, as well as the chief of loading and unloading operations, its loading shift leader and another port employee. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The government on Sunday submitted to the National Assembly its four-year program in which it included 107 major projects covering all economic, social, entertainment and human resources fields to be completed till 2027. Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun invited MPs for a special debate on the program on Tuesday.

Under the program, the government pledged to operate a number of mega projects, like Kuwait's part of the Gulf railway project, operating in the third year of the new Kuwait airport Terminal 2 and raising the number of flights to and out of Kuwait from 240,000 to 650,000 flights by building three new runways.

Expat layoffs, deportations rise in 2023

KUWAIT: Statistics have revealed more than 10,000 expat employees have been terminated during the first half of this year, with a rise in deportations during the same period, while more than 1,000 expats are at the deportation center who will be deported this month. The reason behind deportation is due to criminal or misdemeanor cases, administrative deportation or due to judicial rulings requiring their deportation from Kuwait. The crimes committed by the deportees include drug use, fights, thefts, brewing liquor, expiry of residency and non-compliance with the country's laws.

Heatwaves hit globe as wildfires rage

ROME: Scorching weather gripped three continents on Sunday, whipping up wildfires and threatening to topple temperature records as the dire consequences of global warming take shape. Predictions of historic heat hung over swathes of Asia, Europe and the United States. In the Vatican, 15,000 people braved sweltering temperatures to hear Pope Francis lead prayer, using parasols and fans to keep cool. But in their black robes, priests like Francois Mbemba said they were "sweating like hell". The 29-year-old said it felt hotter in St Peter's Square than in his Democratic Republic of Congo diocese.

In Japan, authorities issued heatstroke alerts to tens of millions of people in 20 of its 47 prefectures as near-record high temperatures scorched large areas and torrential rain pummeled other regions.

Continued on Page 6

More work for Lebanon craftsmen

SIDON, Lebanon: Among meandering alleyways in the historic market of Lebanon's southern city of Sidon, cobblers and menders are doing brisk business, as an economic crisis revives demand for once-fading trades. At Ahmed Al-Bizri's shoe repair store, nestled among old stone arches and a crowded warren of shops and stalls, workers are busy adjusting a woman's sandals and replacing the worn-out sole of a man's shoe.

"Repairs are in high demand," said Bizri, 48, who learned the trade from his father. People from all walks of life "come to us to repair their shoes: Rich, poor, average workers, public servants, soldiers," he added. Since late 2019, Lebanon has been in a state of economic collapse that the World Bank says is one of the worst in modern times. The Lebanese pound has lost around 98 percent of its value against the US dollar, and most of the population has been plunged into poverty.

Bizri said his work "has increased 60 percent" since the crisis began, adding that people now prefer to spend up to one million Lebanese pounds (around \$11 on parallel markets) to fix old shoes rather than

buy new ones. "Even people who had shoes hidden away for 20 years are bringing them out for repair," he said with a smile, boots hanging from rusty hooks and colored laces on the walls around him.

In a shop nearby in central Sidon, fellow cobbler Walid Al-Suri, 58, works with an old manual sewing machine that clicks and clacks as he pumps the pedal with his foot. He stitches up a hole in the side of a shoe and trims the thread, covering it with black polish to camouflage the repair. "It's true that our work has increased," he said from his

Sources said the most deported nationalities are (in order) Indians, Filipinos, Sri Lankans, Egyptians and Bangladeshis. Statistics show these communities have the highest numbers in Kuwait, so it is natural that most violators are from these nationalities. Statistics also showed nearly 250,000 people left Kuwait permanently last year, including 7,000 who worked in the government sector.

The number of expats in the gov-

ernment sector reached 91,000 employees, mostly in the medical and educational sectors. Sources said these government entities will terminate more than 3,000 expat employees who work in administrative and technical sectors. Names of expat employees to be laid off during the second half of the year will also be announced by the municipality, public works ministry, housing authority and ministry of electricity and water.

Meanwhile, the Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee decided on Sunday to approve a draft law abolishing the requirement for a local agent for foreign companies to work in Kuwait, MP Abdulwahab Al-Essa said. The aim of the project is to encourage competition in the domestic economy to improve the quality of services in the country and to reduce the cost of projects and services. Essa said that existing agencies will continue to be valid but foreign companies will be free to cancel their contract with their local agent and operate directly in the Kuwaiti market. (See Page 3)



MORENO VALLEY, California: A firefighter monitors and sets a controlled burn as the Rabbit Fire scorches over 7,500 acres on July 15, 2023. — AFP



SIDON, Lebanon: Workers repair shoes as customers wait in Ahmed Al-Bizri's shoe-repair store on July 11, 2023. — AFP

Continued on Page 6

Musk: Twitter has lost half its ad revenue

NEW YORK: Twitter has lost roughly half of its advertising revenue, according to owner Elon Musk, since he bought the social media platform for \$44 billion last October. Musk, who has been outspoken about the difficulties facing the company, broke the figures in a tweet response to a user who was giving suggestions on financing for the platform. "We're still negative cash flow, due to ~50% drop in advertising revenue plus heavy debt load," the billionaire tweeted Saturday.

"Need to reach positive cash flow before we have the luxury of anything else," he added, without further elaboration. Insider Intelligence has reported that Twitter was set to earn less than \$3 billion in revenue in 2023, down one-third from 2022. Changes instituted by Musk since his takeover of Twitter have turned off users and advertisers alike.

Earlier this month, Musk announced that Twitter was limiting verified accounts to reading 10,000 tweets a day, in a bid "to address extreme levels of data scraping" and "system manipulation" by third-party platforms.

Continued on Page 6



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Exploring the integration of physiotherapy and massage

Specialists shed light on two common therapeutic practices

By Ghadeer Ghloom

KUWAIT: Physiotherapy and massage are two common therapeutic practices that provide relief from various musculoskeletal conditions. Physiotherapy aims to restore joint and muscle function, while massage therapy targets muscle tension and promotes relaxation. To further understand the role of physiotherapy and massage on musculoskeletal health, Kuwait Times interviewed Mohammad Hussain and Manar Ibrahim, two specialists in physiotherapy.

Hussain told Kuwait Times that massaging is only a part of physiotherapy, whereas physiotherapy is not a part of massaging. However, physiotherapy and massage therapy go hand in hand for rehabilitation and injury recovery. After sustaining an injury or undergoing surgery, it is essential to regain strength, flexibility and mobility. Physiotherapists aid in devising personalized treatment plans that include exercises, manual therapy and stabilization techniques to help individuals recover and regain function.

Massage therapy, on the other hand, aids in reducing scar tissue and improving blood circulation, accelerating recovery by promoting the body's natural healing process. Ibrahim explained the connection between physiotherapy and



Mohammad Hussain



Manar Ibrahim

massaging. She said regular physiotherapy sessions can help identify potential musculoskeletal issues before they exacerbate, enabling the implementation of preventive measures. Similarly, massage therapy can assist individuals in maintaining proper muscle tone and preventing symptom recurrence.

However, while both approaches aim to alleviate pain and improve bodily function, they differ significantly in terms of techniques, goals and scope. She also clarified that physiotherapy employs a collection of evidence-based techniques, including exercise therapy and manual therapy such as joint mobilizations or manipulations. These techniques are

designed to address specific injuries, improve range of motion, reduce pain and restore normal movement patterns, which cannot be treated through traditional massaging.

Massaging is for softening tissues through rubbing and pressing. According to Ibrahim, there are different massage techniques, such as Swedish, deep tissue or sports massage, which are employed to relieve tension, reduce stress, promote relaxation and enhance blood circulation. On the other hand, Hussain warned that despite the benefits of massaging as part of physiotherapy, people must be cautious in case of inflammation, especially joint inflammation, because



KUWAIT: Physiotherapy and massage therapy go hand in hand for rehabilitation and injury recovery.

massaging inflamed joints could make the situation even worse.

According to Hussain and Ibrahim, physiotherapy encompasses a wider scope of practice, often involving the treatment of acute and chronic conditions, sports injuries, musculoskeletal pain and neurological disorders, as physiotherapists work closely with patients, conducting thorough assessments and designing personalized treatment plans

to address specific problems and goals, using evidence-based techniques and focusing on restoring one's musculoskeletal health, strength and functionality and improving quality of life. Meanwhile, massaging takes part in facilitating the process of physiotherapy sessions for some conditions, because its application is primarily focused on providing relaxation and temporary relief from muscle tension and stress.

NCCAL mirrors Kuwait's unique cultural identity

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Council for Arts and Letters (NCCAL) has remarkably developed starting with activities at the local level when it was established in 1973 and later in the years expanding them at the regional and international levels.

The NCCAL, in half a century, succeeded in mirroring Kuwait's national and cultural identities, Kuwait's advocacy of openness and efforts to enrich cultural knowledge. Establishment of the council was planned by the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah when he served as crown prince and prime minister. He had personally launched the initiative of establishing the NCCAL, first chaired by the late minister of state for cabinet affairs, Abdulaziz Hussein. The late minister had shouldered the responsibility of executing the plan, with aid of elite Kuwaiti literati, thinkers and artists.



KUWAIT: Kuwait University Professor Hassan Ashkanani shows visitors his collection of NCCAL publications on the 60th anniversary of Kuwait's accession to the United Nations in this file photo.

An Amiri Decree was issued during the era of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on July 17, 1973. It had been decided to place the council after its birth under umbrella of the crown prince, Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. In later years, the council received special care and attention from the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and currently by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Currently, the council executes the 2023-2028 strategy, designed to bolster Kuwait's status on the global cultural map—with follow-up and support by the Minister of Information, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Abdulrahman Al-Mutairi. Minister Al-Mutairi holds regular meetings with the council's leaders to tackle cultural issues and challenges facing it.

The NCCAL holds regular festivals and activities, issues dictionaries and references, organizes exhibitions, conventions and festivals, seminars and presents awards. Moreover, its personnel have helped in discovering relics and ancient treasures. Furthermore, it backs the Kuwaiti diplomatic missions on the international and Arab arenas. Locally, it runs more than 17 cultural centers in Kuwait's six governorates as well as on Failaka Island. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Prospective students visit the PAAET booth at the Avenues on Sunday. — KUNA photos

PAAET to launch 5 new scientific specialties

KUWAIT: The Dean of Admission and Registration at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr Fawzi Al-Dukhi announced on Sunday that the authority will launch five new scientific specialties in the academic year 2023/2024 and reopen the English language specialization for the intermediate

stage, after being closed in previous years.

The announcement came on the sidelines of a campaign which PAAET launched on Sunday to help new high school graduates learn about the programs they offer. It will continue until July 23, from 10 am to 10 pm at The Avenues, with the aim of orienting students to the requirements of joining the PAAET and the specialties available to them based on their interests.

Dukhi told KUNA that the minimum GPAs required for admission have not changed from last year, ranging from 55 to 80 percent for colleges and from 50 to 60 percent for institutes and training courses for high school graduates. He urged students to

apply for the re-launched English program because it is "among the most sought-after specialties in the labor market".

Applied Statistics is among the five specialties added after PAAET examined the needs in the labor market, said Dukhi. Two new specialties have also been introduced in the training courses sector, namely "veterinary science" and "aesthetic agriculture", in addition to the development of two specialties in the Faculty of Health Sciences: "oral and dental health technician" and "dental clinic technician". The authority is accepting applications for the new academic year online from July 20 till August 17. —KUNA



Dr Fawzi Al-Dukhi

Kuwaiti charity hands out 24 fishing boats to Egyptians

ASWAN, Egypt: The Kuwaiti Office for Charitable Projects in Cairo delivered 24 fishing boats to small-scale fishermen in Aswan governorate, south of Egypt. The boats were delivered during a ceremony attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt and Permanent Representative at the Arab League Ghanim Al-Ghanim and some Egyptian and Kuwaiti dignitaries. The boats funded by Kuwait's Al-Najat Charity society worth KD 9,800 (about \$30,000) are part of an initiative aiming to support fishermen.

Speaking at the ceremony, Al-Ghanim said that the projects inaugurated in Aswan reflect good relations between Kuwait and Egypt. He said Egypt and Kuwait have common goals and interests, and fruitful cooperation in various fields, thanks to the wise leaderships of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Egyptian President AbdelFattah Al-Sisi.

Meanwhile, Sara Al-Mutairi, acting head of the office, said participating in this celebration "is the



ASWAN: During the ceremony to deliver 24 fishing boats to fishermen in Aswan governorate.

best evidence of Kuwait's keenness, with all its official and popular institutions and bodies, in contributing effectively to the various development projects in Egypt and a true embodiment of the deep-rooted relations between the two countries.

Al-Ghanim in the presence of Al-Mutairi and deputy governor of Aswan Dr Ghada Abu Zaid in-

augurated two mosques and a water desalination plant in the governorate. Abu Zaid thanked Kuwait and its charities for their contributions to humanitarian and development projects in Egypt. She noted that the next phase would witness "fruitful cooperation" in some development projects between Aswan and the office. — KUNA



ASWAN, Egypt: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Kuwait hands over a boat to an Egyptian fisherman.



The Kuwaiti-funded mosque.

Local

Government lists 107 projects in its four-year action plan

Projects include new entertainment city, Failaka Island tourist attractions

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The government on Sunday submitted to the National Assembly its four-year program in which it included 107 major projects covering all economic, social, entertainment and human resources fields to be completed through to 2027. Speaker Ahmad Al-Saadoun invited MPs for a special debate on the program on Tuesday.

Under the program, the government pledged to operate a number of mega projects like Kuwait's part of the Gulf Railway project, operating in the third year the new Kuwait Airport Terminal 2 and raising the number of flights to and out of Kuwait from 240,000 to 650,000 flights by building three new runways.

It said the government will revise the country's residence law for foreigners without providing further details and vowed to take measures as part of its plan to reduce the number of

expats in the country, currently forming just under 70 percent of Kuwait's 4.5 million population.

The government also vowed to build or repair thousands of kilometers of roads, mostly damaged by rain, and operate the long-delayed Mubarak Al-

into a regional financial and trade hub that is attractive to foreign investments and to be led by the private sector.

Among the major projects listed under the program is the opening of an international class entertainment city (amusement park) in Doha, west of Ku-

government said it will restructure the subsidies scheme, currently costing around KD 6 billion a year, or a quarter of expenditures, to direct subsidies to sections that need it.

The government also plans to control expenditures by setting a ceiling for budget spending over the mid-term, diversify sources of income, currently heavily dependent on oil, issuing a framework for corporate tax and launching a mechanism to set prices for public services and fines.

The government also plans to revise public sector wages and at the same time encourage Kuwaitis to seek jobs in the private sector. The program states that the government will seek to get the approval for public debt legislation but to be linked with high-value economic projects.

About housing, the government pledged to distribute 43,000 houses and land to help resolve the housing

problem facing Kuwaiti citizens. About 92,000 Kuwaiti families are on the waiting list for government houses or land.

In the energy sector, the program states that Kuwait's production capacity will be raised from 2.7 million barrels per day to 3.15 million bpd gradually until the fourth year. During the same period, the government expects to raise free natural gas output from 521 million cubic feet daily now to 930 million cubic feet daily at the end of the program.

The government plans to launch the Northern Exclusive Zone in the first year of the program and the Abdali economic exclusive zone in the second year. It plans to privatize the North Shuaiba Power Generation and Water Desalination Plant also in the second year. To boost government local investments, the government plans to set up a sovereign fund for domestic investments.

“The government will seek to get the approval for public debt legislation but to be linked with high-value economic projects.”

Kabir Container Harbour on Boubyan Island facing Iraq with a capacity of 8.1 million containers when completed.

The government said the main target of the program is to transfer Kuwait

City, slated in the fourth year of the program at a cost estimated at KD 200 million. It will also open Failaka Island as a tourist and cultural attraction.

Under financial stability projects, the

Entertainment City



Kuwait plans to reopen the Entertainment City in Doha with high-level global standards. The estimated KD 160 million - KD 200 million project with a 200,000 square-meter theme park is expected to attract up to 1 million visi-

tors by 2030. It is expected to generate up to KD 85 million in the local GDP. Furthermore, the Sheikh Zayed Nature Reserve, a 1,500,000 square-meter nature reserve, is expected to be built as part of the project.

Failaka Island



Kuwait plans to rebuild Failaka Island into a touristic destination with a luxury resort, chalets, a public park, shopping malls and other facilities. It is estimated to

receive around 300,000 visitors by 2030, create up to 3,000 job opportunities by 2035 and generate up to KD 80 million in the local GDP by 2030.

Railway project



Kuwait plans to launch operations in the GCC Railway link project and build train stations in Nuwaiseeb and Shadadiya to inaugurate the Kuwait-Saudi line by 2027. Furthermore, the government plans to build a touristic and logistics infrastructure in the surrounding area.

Child protection

Kuwait plans to establish a digital platform to receive and deal with domestic violence cases, and set up child protection teams around the country to protect children from abuse and negligence. The plan also includes constant reevaluation of minimum pension payments, and restructuring the subsidies scheme to direct subsidies to sections that need it.



Renewable energy

Kuwait plans to launch an active mechanism to cover 15% of local energy consumption using power generated through renewable energy by 2030, and put in place a comprehensive strategy to save energy through smart technology.

Mubarak Port



Kuwait plans to complete the Mubarak Port with the goal of turning the country into a key regional hub for shipping and trade, and also build the 'Kuwait City for Air Cargo'. Furthermore, Kuwait plans to establish the Kuwait Post Company to offer top-quality post and logistic services.

Health development



Kuwait plans to invite 50 specialists annually to conduct surgeries in cases that usually require treatment abroad. The government also plans to increase intensive care units' capacity by 100

percent, reduce the waiting time for chronic disease patients by 30 percent, and launch a specialized drug addiction treatment and rehabilitation center.

Airport Terminal 2

Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 2 (T2) is set to be inaugurated by the third year of the plan. The 708,000 square-meter terminal is designed to have an annual capacity of 25 million passengers. It



includes 51 gates and can load 21 Airbus A380 planes simultaneously. The plan calls for increasing air traffic capacity from 240,000 to 650,000 flights on a gradual basis.

Education program

Kuwait plans to set the 'Horizons Schools' project in motion by launching six new schools that follow a new high standard educational system. Furthermore, the education ministry plans to launch the "teacher's license" project to guarantee high quality standards for teachers, and a digital learning platform to diversify self-learning sources. In addition, the government plans to launch 'unified national tests' package' to guarantee high education quality levels.



Housing and infrastructure



Kuwait plans to issue 42,932 building permits in four years in three new housing projects: South Qairawan City, South Saad Al-Abdullah City and South Sabah Al-Ahmad City. The government also plans to distribute 15,094 housing

units in South Qairawan City and South Saad Al-Abdullah City. Meanwhile, the plan includes building a revamped highway network with a total length of 6,500 kilometers.

News in Brief

Appeals court finds 'Military fund' suspects not guilty

KUWAIT: The appeals court headed by justice Hassan Al-Shimmari declared Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Faisal and judge Salah Al-Mishal innocent in the case of forging the Amiri Diwan letter in the case of the "military fund". The criminal court exonerated all suspects in this case of their charges last May. The case goes back to December 2022 when the criminal court cancelled the public prosecution's decision to shelve the complaint of Sheikh Hamad Sabah Al-Ahmad in the case of forging the Amiri Diwan letter about the military fund, reopening investigations. The case is also still under deliberation at the cassation court.

900 students join Manpower summer training program

KUWAIT: Acting Deputy Director General of National Manpower Affairs at Public Authority for Manpower Najat Al-Yousuf announced the launch of a training program which allows students to work in the private sector. The program will run until August 7. She said the program has attracted school-aged youth who are now enrolled in training classes aimed at raising awareness of the importance of working in the private sector and its effect on people's professional development. The program also highlights the importance of training in non-government entities due to its effects on qualifying students, strengthening their skills and nurturing their self-confidence. She said that 55 private sector companies are participating, and 1660 training opportunities are available in several sectors including banking, insurance, retail, law, oil factories, cooperative societies and others at a total of 900 students. She thanked all those who cooperated with the authority to provide training opportunities each year since 2005 until now during holidays and students breaks, as the total number of students who were trained during those years is more than 12,000 students.



Najat Al-Yousuf

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Pigeons take shade under the trees on beach at the Blajat area as temperatures hit 47 degrees Celcius on Sunday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Netizens demand punishment for women harassing men

'Harassment laws place only men in the spotlight'

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Harassment can occur in any context and affect individuals of any gender. With more than 18,000 tweets, the hashtag #Punish_Men_Molesters went viral on Twitter, demanding punishment for women who harass men. Posts with this hashtag said punishment for harassment always falls on the man, while people wondered a woman who harasses a man is not punished, arguing that harassment is not exclusive to one gender.

"Harassment includes verbal abuse and unwanted sexual hints or words. Women display themselves in a clear way as a sign of sexual connotation for men, so why are not they punished?" Ahmed Adan asked. "Why does the harassment law serve women but not men?" Adan indicated that wearing makeup, accessories and indecent clothes are considered clear and

explicit harassment. "The unnecessary look is an obvious act to impress men on the roads," he added.

Agreeing with Adan, Maryam affirmed there is no reason for a woman to display herself in an Arab society except for her husband. "So there must be a clear and deterrent law that puts an end to immodest women in order to prevent harassment," she said.

Abdullah Abdel-Fattah tweeted that according to Islam and God's orders, the man is assigned to spend money on the woman so that she does not leave her house except for necessities. "What is the matter with women mixing with men?! Gasoline should not be placed next to the fire in order to not cause an explosion. Therefore, it is not surprising that people sexually harass each other," he said. He wondered if a man goes out in his pajamas in public places, he will be told to respect the public place, so why is a woman not told to not

wear makeup and provocative clothes that make men weak, he demanded.

"If a man harasses a woman, he will be punished. We demand the same for women who harass men. The harassment by a woman can be through indirect flirtation, her perfume, putting on adornments and anything that tempts a man with her charms," Sameh Hamdan said. "Harassment laws place only men in the spotlight, forgetting that more than nine percent of women are harassers, especially women in power who harass male employees and blackmail them, in addition to psychological harassment. The focus must also include women," he said.

Foouz Al-Shehri tweeted: "How many corrupt (female) harassers have spoiled girls and ruined homes? They are neither innocent nor ignorant. Rather, they deliberately draw the attention of men with premeditation."



Pakistan Embassy composts mango festival waste

KUWAIT: The Embassy of Pakistan in Kuwait in collaboration with Shamia Nature Reserve took an initiative aimed at contributing to a sustainable environment and supporting Kuwait's vision for 2035. This joint effort focused on transforming the leftover waste from the Pakistan Mango Festival into valuable compost, highlighting Pakistan's commitment to environmental stewardship.

The Pakistan Mango Festival, held recently at Souk Al-Mubarakya and Al-Zahra Co-operative Society, celebrated the rich exquisite taste of Pakistan's renowned mangoes.

Recognizing the importance of minimizing food waste and promoting sustainable practices, the Embassy with support of Adiba Al-Fahad, founder of Shamia Nature Reserve, as well as Pakistan's Women Forum, undertook the initiative of repurposing the festival's leftovers, by utilizing the remnants of the Pakistan Mango Festival, including peels, seeds, and other organic waste for making compost.

This compost production process is aligned with Kuwait's ambitious vision for 2035, which emphasizes sustainable development and environmental preservation. The resulting compost serves as a valuable resource for enhancing soil fertility, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers, and improving agricultural practices. This joint effort not only



prevented wastage but also contributed to the economy by creating a sustainable solution that benefits both the environment and local communities.

Ambassador Malik Muhammad Farooq expressed his gratitude towards Shamia Nature Reserve for their collaboration and underscored the significance of this partnership. He conveyed his gratitude to be part of this remarkable initiative, aligning Pakistan's commitment to environmental sustainability with Kuwait's vision for a prosperous future. He shared that by repurposing the leftovers of the Pakistan Mango Festival into compost, the embassy and the Pakistani community are actively contributing to a greener and more sustainable Kuwait. This joint effort undertaken by the Embassy of Pakistan and Shamia Nature Reserve is a testament to the shared commitment of Pakistan and Kuwait in addressing climate change, fostering sustainable development, and building a greener future.



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European right eyes fresh gains with Spain election

Turkey's quake survivors' latest menace - dust

'Hot and dangerous weekend': US bakes under relentless heat dome

Brutal conditions threaten to break records

LOS ANGELES: Tens of millions of Americans braced for more sweltering temperatures Sunday as brutal conditions threatened to break records due to a relentless heat dome that has baked parts of the country all week. The National Weather Service (NWS) warned of an "extremely hot and dangerous weekend," with daytime highs routinely ranging between 10 and 20 degrees Fahrenheit above normal in the US West. Residents of central and southern California saw thermometers peaking at 105 to 110 degrees Fahrenheit (41 to 43 degrees Celsius) on Saturday, it said.

By Saturday afternoon, California's famous Death Valley, one of the hottest places on Earth, had reached a sizzling 124F (51C), with Sunday's peak predicted to soar as high as 129F (54C). Even overnight lows there could exceed 100F (38C). The heat is forecast to remain anchored over the west for the weekend, "growing hotter in the South by early next week," according to the NWS.

Authorities have been sounding the alarm for days, advising people to avoid outdoor activities in the daytime and to avoid dehydration, which can quickly become fatal in such temperatures. In Arizona, the state capital of Phoenix has recorded 16 straight days above 109F (43C), as temperatures hit 117F (47C) Saturday afternoon and are expected to stay above 90F (32C) overnight. The NWS said Phoenix is "likely to register its hottest week on record by 7-day temperature average."

The city has organized volunteers to direct residents to cooling centers and distribute bottles of water and hats, but program head David Hondula told the lo-

cal ABC station that its three-days-per-week schedule is "clearly... not enough" as the heat intensifies. The NWS has said that "heat is the leading weather-related killer in the US" and to take the risk "seriously." At a construction site outside Houston, a 28-year-old worker who gave his name only as Juan helped complete a wall in the blazing heat.

"Just when I take a drink of water, I get dizzy, I want to vomit because of the heat," he told AFP. "I need something else, a Coca-Cola, a Gatorade - and cold - just to be able to keep going." Residents of the Texas metropolis have been asked to conserve energy from 2:00 to 10:00 pm Saturday through Monday by provider Reliant Energy, in an attempt to mitigate high demand. Further west, the Texas border city of El Paso marked its 30th consecutive day of temperatures reaching or topping 100F (38C) Saturday, though it had dipped slightly to 89F by the evening.

'Not typical'

Heat waves are occurring more often and more intensely in major cities across the United States, according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency, with a frequency of six per year during the 2010s and 2020s compared to two per year during the 1960s. "This heat wave is NOT typical desert heat," the NWS's Las Vegas branch tweeted, specifying that "its long duration, extreme daytime temperatures, & warm nights" were unusual.

In Canada, which is suffering from warm temperatures combined with months of below-average rainfall, the amount of land burned by devastating wildfires climbed to an-all time high of 24.7 million acres



A child plays in the water fountain at Grand Park in Los Angeles, California, on July 2, 2023. After months of unseasonable weather across Southern California, a heatwave has arrived bringing triple digit temperatures. — AFP

(10 million hectares) so far this year on Saturday. "We find ourselves this year with figures that are worse than our most pessimistic scenarios," Yan Boulanger, a researcher at Canada's natural resources ministry, told AFP.

Smoke from the wildfires was creat-

ing unhealthy air quality conditions in upper-central parts of the United States, similar to episodes in June when Canadian blazes cloaked the US East Coast in a noxious haze. While it can be hard to attribute a particular weather event to climate change, scientists insist that global warm-

ing - linked to humanity's dependence on fossil fuels - is responsible for the multiplication and intensification of heat waves around the world. The US heat wave comes after the EU's climate-monitoring service said the planet saw its hottest June on record last month. — AFP

Japan govt issues heatstroke alerts

TOKYO: Japan issued heatstroke alerts Sunday to tens of millions of people as near-record high temperatures scorched swathes of the country, while torrential rain pummeled other regions. National broadcaster NHK warned viewers that the heat was at life-threatening levels, as temperatures soared to nearly 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in some places, including the capital Tokyo. "Please stay hydrated and use air conditioners appropriately, and refrain from outings that seem difficult," a news presenter said.

The government issued heatstroke alerts for 20 of the country's 47 prefectures, mainly in the east and southwest, affecting tens of millions of people. Heat can kill by inducing heatstroke, which damages the brain, kidneys and other organs, but it can also trigger other conditions such as a heart attack or breathing problems. Kiryu city in Gunma prefecture, north of Tokyo, saw the mercury reach 39.7C while Hachioji in

western Tokyo reached 38.9C, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency. Japan's highest temperature ever recorded was 41.1C, which was first recorded in Kumagaya city, in Saitama, in 2018 and then matched in Hamamatsu city, Shizuoka, in 2020.

Some places experienced their highest temperatures in more than four decades on Sunday, including Hirono town in Fukushima prefecture with 37.3C, and hot spring resort city Nasushiobara with 35.4C, according to the weather agency's data. Meanwhile, torrential rain continued to lash northern Japan, where flooding and at least one landslide have been recorded. A man was found dead in a car submerged in a rice field in Akita prefecture, police told AFP, a week after seven people were killed in similar weather in the country's southwest.

Since last weekend, a heavy band of precipitation has dumped record-breaking amounts of rain in some parts of Japan, causing rivers to overflow and sodden earth to collapse in landslides. Japan is experiencing its annual rainy season, which often brings heavy downpours, and sometimes results in flooding and landslides, as well as casualties. But scientists say climate change is intensifying the risk of heavy rains in Japan and elsewhere because a warmer atmosphere holds more water. — AFP

depends on aid to survive. The spill could reach Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia, and would produce highly polluted air over a large area, exposing whole communities to life-threatening toxins. Maritime traffic through the Bab Al-Mandab Strait to the Suez Canal, the route to the Mediterranean, could be disrupted, costing billions per day, the UN says.

Disruptions and delays

Attempts to inspect the deteriorating ship have dragged on for years, with UN requests for access repeatedly declined by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels who control much of Yemen's north including Hodeida port. The Houthis, who have been fighting a Saudi-led coalition since 2015, have demanded guarantees that the value of the Safer's oil would be handed over to pay the salaries of their employees. In March last year, the Houthis signed a memorandum of understanding with the UN, establishing a framework for cooperation to facilitate the project. Inspections finally kicked off on May 30, with the arrival of a team of experts from the private company SMIT Salvage who began preparations for the operation. In June, the UN secured insurance coverage for the complex and risky operation, clearing yet another major obstacle.

Earlier this month, the UN said that SMIT had declared the vessel stable enough for a ship-to-ship transfer. The Nautica, a super-tanker the UN purchased for the oil transfer, arrived from Djibouti on Sunday and was due to moor alongside the Safer. The pumping operation was expected to start within three days. Removing the oil could take between one week and one month, depending on how easily it can be pumped, Peter Berdowski, CEO of SMIT Salvage's parent company Boskalis, said last month.

However, even after the transfer, the decaying Safer will still "pose a residual environmental threat, holding viscous oil residue and remaining at risk of breaking apart", the UN has warned. During and after the transfer, SMIT will assess how much oil sludge remains in the Safer's tanks, and it will be moved to a specialized yard for cleaning or, if it is too fragile to be shifted, it will be cleaned on site. The Safer is intended to be fully decommissioned, with its parts recycled. The Nautica will be renamed Yemen, and will stay in the area as talks continue about who controls the ship and the oil. — AFP

Yemen stricken oil tanker: Defusing a 'ticking time bomb'

HODEIDA: A rusting tanker containing more than a million barrels of oil has lain abandoned off the coast of war-torn Yemen since 2015, threatening a major environmental disaster if it breaks up or explodes. On Sunday, a United Nations-owned super-tanker arrived for a delicate operation to pump the oil from the abandoned ship, the FSO Safer. Here are some key facts:

Blast risk

The 47-year-old Safer, long used as a floating oil storage platform, is moored off Yemen's western port of Hodeida in the Red Sea, a key shipping route. It has not been serviced during Yemen's eight-year civil war. Lying about eight kilometers from the coast, the Safer is carrying four times as much oil as was spilled in the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster off Alaska. The systems needed to pump inert gas into its tanks stopped working in 2017, raising the risk of an explosion. The UN and Greenpeace have described the vessel as a "ticking time bomb". The UN operation to transfer oil from the Safer and tow the ship to a scrap yard is budgeted at some \$143 million. The UN says it still needs an additional \$22 million to tow the Safer to a recycling yard and safely tether the replacement vessel to ensure safe storage of the oil, until its eventual destination is decided.

\$20bn spill?

In the event of a spill, the UN estimates clean-up costs could top \$20 billion, with potentially catastrophic environmental, humanitarian and economic consequences. A major spill would devastate fishing communities on Yemen's Red Sea coast, instantly wiping out livelihoods for 200,000 people, according to the UN. It could close desalination plants on the Red Sea, and shut the Hodeidah and Saleef ports — lifelines for bringing food, fuel and other vital supplies into Yemen, where most of the population de-

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International

European right eyes fresh gains with Spain election

Vote could see extreme right taking a share of power

MADRID: Europe's eyes will turn to Spain next Sunday where a widely expected right-wing victory in a snap election would further consolidate the dominance of conservative parties across the bloc. Called by Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez after the left was routed in May 28 local elections, the vote could see the extreme right taking a share of power for the first time since the country's dictatorship ended in 1975.

The polls suggest Spain's next government will be a coalition of the right-wing Popular Party (PP) and the far-right Vox. If the polls are accurate, it would confirm "an ongoing gradual normalization of the far-right at a European level," said Steven Forti, a professor at Barcelona's Autonomous University. For Sanchez, who has been in power since 2018 and heads a left-wing coalition with the hard-left Podemos, the stakes are high. The election also carries consequences for the European left. "It is clear there's an ongoing shift (to the right) and Spain is a very important bastion against this regressive and reactionary current," Ecology Minister Teresa Ribera told La Vanguardia newspaper.

The Vox effect

Following the PP's triumph on May 28, it appeared Alberto Nunez Feijoo's party was heading for a clear victory in the July 23 snap election. But then polls suggested that although the PP would win, it would fall short of an absolute majority of 176 within the 350-seat parliament, meaning it would need Vox's support to govern. Ultra-nationalist and europhobic, Vox emerged in 2013 out of a split within the PP, bursting into parliament in 2019 as Spain's third-largest party. But the right's momentum has slowed as the PP and Vox negotiated deals to govern in several regions they won from the left.

During the talks, Vox has held firm to several of

its key principles, refusing to recognize gender violence or to budge on its climate denial. Although such positions are not endorsed by the PP, Vox's stance has overshadowed the campaign of Feijoo, a self-declared moderate. Sanchez has made the extremist threat his clarion call, warning that a vote for the PP would be tantamount to inviting Vox into government in what he argues would be a major step backwards for Spain.

His aim is twofold: to dissuade centrist voters from casting their ballots for the PP while also mobilizing the half-a-million left-wing supporters who stayed at home on May 28. But Sanchez's slim hopes for a rebound were dashed following poor results from opinion polls after a July 10 televised debate against Feijoo. Sanchez has also hammered home his economic record, with 5.5 percent growth last year. Spain last month also became the first major EU economy where inflation fell below 2.0 percent. The problem for Sanchez is that the public still perceives the economic situation as very negative.

'Overthrowing Sanchismo'

Sanchez has taken the initiative on the media front, giving interviews to Spain's most popular TV programs to play up his more personable side. "Sanchez realises that he was wrong not to talk to media outlets that he considered to be hostile," said Cristina Monge, a political scientist at Zaragoza University.

But it may be too little, too late given that his personal image is very poor outside of left-wing circles, and has also suffered as a result of several Podemos-led reforms that caused a public backlash. This has been used to great effect by Feijoo who has focused his campaign on "overthrowing Sanchismo" - which he has defined as "changing the form and substance" of politics in Spain, and "revoking all those minority-based laws which harm the majority".

both sewage and rainwater, resulting in effluent often spilling into the Thames due to lack of capacity.

Growing population

"Any time it rains, even a light drizzle, the sewers fill up and pour directly into the river," said Taylor Geall of the construction firm Tideway, which is behind the project. "At the moment, in an average year 40 million tons of sewage spills into the Thames completely untreated," he said. Although the old brick-lined sewers—built between 1859 and 1875 -- are still in "pristine condition" they are just not big enough.

"The issue is capacity," Geall added. The network was constructed when London's population stood at just four million compared to about nine million today. With the size of the population set to continue to swell, the need for the £4.3-billion (\$5.6-billion) upgrade has become critical. The new 25-kilometre (15-mile) "super sewer", which is 7.2 meters in diameter, snakes from west to east following the curves of the river.

When operational, it will carry sewage only when rain means the existing sewers are full to overflowing. Overflow points will allow the sewage that would otherwise have flowed into the Thames to be diverted into the new tunnel. At its height, 10,000 people were working on the project, which has seen six tunnel-boring machines forge through three distinct geologies—clay in the west of the city, sand and gravel in the centre and chalk in the east.



BARCELONA: Spain's Prime Minister and Socialist Party (PSOE) candidate Pedro Sanchez smiles during a campaign meeting in Barcelona on July 16, 2023, ahead of Spain's July 23 general elections. — AFP

Sanchez is hoping he will be able to form a coalition with Labor Minister Yolanda Diaz's new leftist alliance Sumar, an unlikely scenario given the polls. It has recently been backed, albeit reluctantly, by Podemos, which has plunged in the polls. Recent polls put Sumar neck-and-neck with Vox for third place. Aside from the large

number of undecided voters, another factor is the timing of the election - at the height of summer when several million holidaymakers will have to vote by post. But experts are increasingly ruling out a repeat of the inconclusive election of April 2019 when Spaniards were forced back to the ballot box several months later.— AFP

London's new 'super sewer' to end Thames pollution blight

LONDON: The door of the steel box lift clanks shut and a crane slowly lowers construction workers building London's "super sewer" 40 meters to the bottom of an enormous vertical shaft. Here, a world away from the city's busy streets, thousands of engineers and construction staff have spent the past seven years creating the biggest-ever upgrade to the city's 19th-century sewers. London's existing sewerage network dates back to the second half of the 1800s when it was designed by civil engineer Joseph Bazalgette in response to the infamous "Great Stink".

In July and August 1858, a combination of soaring temperatures and a sewerage system that emptied straight into the Thames resulted in the city being engulfed in a cloud of putrid air. The unbearable stench led to the construction of the sewerage system that is still in use today. But in recent decades, lack of capacity due to the British capital's population growth has meant that raw sewage has once again flowed into the river. Although an engineering wonder of the 19th century, Bazalgette's network used the same pipes to transport

Sewage spills

The final stages of the mega project, however, come amid controversy for the privatized water sector which stands accused of chronic underinvestment in their networks. The latest figures released by the government-sponsored Environment Agency show an average of 825 sewage spills a day last year into UK rivers and coastal areas. A number of beaches on the Isle of Wight off England's southern coast had to be closed during last year's summer heatwave due to the high proportion of bacteria from water pollution.

Surfers Against Sewage, a pressure group, recently published a list of 83 beaches to avoid in Britain due to the discharge of raw sewage. The government this week confirmed that water companies, as well as others such as energy and waste operators, will face unlimited fines for polluting practices. The head of Thames Water, whose customers are funding the tunnel through a levy on their bills, stepped down in late June amid a furor over the company's £14 billion debt.

With the tunneling phase of the "super sewer" completed last year, it is on track to be trialled in 2024 and fully operational by 2025. "What we're doing is intercepting and taking away 95 percent of the spills," Geall said. "So once we've finished the river won't look much different—it's always going to be quite a silty river - but it will be a much healthier environment for the fish, the marine mammals and the birds that live in it as well



LONDON: Civil engineers work next to a 7 meter wide concrete tunnel at the Thames Tideway building site, in west London. London's existing sewerage network dates back to the second half of the 1800s. — AFP

as for the rowing communities that use it."

Mathew Frith of the London Wildlife Trust agreed that the new sewer would make a "major contribution" to the River Thames' recovery, but warned it would not solve the problem elsewhere. "Some (water companies) are taking their responsibilities quite innovatively. But whether there's that level of investment that we've got in London, I'm not sure that's the case yet," he said. — AFP

Heatwaves hit globe as wildfires...

Continued from Page 1

National broadcaster NHK warned the heat was life-threatening, with the capital and other places recording nearly 40 degrees Celsius. Japan's highest temperature ever - 41.1C first recorded in Kumagaya city, Saitama, in 2018 - could be beaten, according to the meteorological agency. Some places experienced their highest temperatures in more than four decades Sunday, including Hirono town in Fukushima prefecture with 37.3C.

The United States National Weather Service reported that a powerful heatwave stretching from California to Texas was expected to peak during an "extremely hot and dangerous weekend". California's Death Valley, often among the hottest places on Earth, is also likely to register new peaks on Sunday, with the mercury possibly surpassing 54C. At a Texas construction site outside Houston, a 28-year-old worker who gave his name only as Juan struggled in the blazing heat. "Just when I take a drink of water, I get dizzy, I want to vomit because of the heat," he told AFP.

Southern California is fighting numerous wildfires, including one in Riverside County that has burned more than 7,500 acres and prompted evacuation orders. Further north, the Canadian government said wildfires had burned a record-breaking 10 million hectares this year, with more damage expected as the summer drags on.

In Europe, Italians were warned to prepare for "the most intense heatwave of the summer and also one of the most intense of all time". Predictions of historic highs in the coming days led the health ministry to sound a red alert for 16 cities including Rome, Bologna and Florence. Temperatures are likely to hit 40C in Rome by Monday and 42C-43C on Tuesday, smashing the record of 40.5C set in August 2007. Sicily and Sardinia could wilt under temperatures as high as 48C, the European Space Agency warned - "potentially the hottest temperatures ever recorded in Europe".

The Acropolis in Athens, one of Greece's top tourist attractions, closed for a third day running Sunday during the hottest hours. In Romania, temperatures are expected to reach 39C on Monday across most



MATHURA, India: People wade through the floodwaters of swollen river Yamuna on July 16, 2023. — AFP

of the country. Little reprieve is forecast for Spain, where the met agency warned of a new heatwave Monday through Wednesday taking temperatures above 40C in the Canary Islands and the southern Andalusia region.

On La Palma island, which endured a volcanic eruption in 2021, a fire burned 5,000 hectares this weekend forcing the evacuation of 4,000 people. "I feel powerless to see how everything is burning," Patricia Sanchez, a Spanish Red Cross worker, told AFP. "To see two entire villages evacuated, to know that there are people who lost everything because of the volcano and have rebuilt their lives in the north, and now they are evacuated again and at risk of losing everything again," the 37-year-old said.

Despite the heat, parts of Asia have also been battered by torrential rain. In South Korea, rescuers on Sunday battled to reach people trapped in a flooded tunnel, after heavy rains for the last four days triggered floods and landslides that killed at least 37 people and left nine missing.

The country is at the peak of its summer monsoon season, with more rain forecast through Wednesday. In northern Japan on Sunday, a man was found dead in a flooded car, a week after seven people were killed in similar weather in the country's southwest.

In northern India, relentless monsoon rains have reportedly killed at least 90 people, following burning heat. Major flooding and landslides are common during India's monsoons, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency and severity. China on Sunday issued several temperature alerts, warning of 40-45C in the partly desert region of Xinjiang, and 39C in southern Guangxi region. — AFP

Musk: Twitter has lost half...

Continued from Page 1

Non-verified users — the free accounts that make up the majority of users — are limited to reading 1,000 tweets per day, while new unverified accounts are limited to 500 tweets.

Twitter has also said TweetDeck, a popular program that allows users to monitor several accounts at once, will only be available to verified users from next month. The changes came as Threads, an app launched by Facebook parent Meta as a rival to Twitter, registered more than 100 million users in its first five days. Earlier this year, the artificial intelligence app ChatGPT, created by OpenAI, took two months to reach the same number of active users. According to some estimates, Threads has now reached 150 million users, with India leading the way, boosted by its link to Instagram that gives it a built-in audience of more than two billion users and spares the platform the challenge of starting from scratch. Twitter is thought to have around 200 million regular users but it has suffered repeated technical failures since Musk bought the platform and sacked thousands of staff.

More work for Lebanon...

Continued from Page 1

workshop, a tiny space with faded green walls filled with shoes of all kinds. But "there are no profits because the price of all the materials has gone up, from glue to needles, thread and nails," he said.

In Lebanon, a country dependent on imports, inflation has soared. In 2022, inflation averaged 171 percent, according to the World Bank — one of the highest rates worldwide. "We pay for everything in dollars, not in Lebanese pounds," said Suri, who repairs around 20 shoes a day. For that, he said he earns about \$11, hardly enough to cover the basic needs of his family of three. Some people have asked him to repair shoes that were verging on unfixable because they had no money for new ones, he said.

Elsewhere in the coastal city, Mustafa Al-Qadi, 67, is mending duvets under the soft light of a window

Many have expressed privacy concerns over Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg's new platform, which asks users to give Meta permission to track them closely across the Internet. Those demands have delayed the launch of Threads in Europe, where new legislation limits the ability of Meta to track and share data across its family of platforms. Its business model revolves around sucking up personal data to use for targeted ads and Threads accounts are linked to Instagram accounts.

But few expect Threads to maintain its embargo in Europe indefinitely. European law expert Alexandre de Stree said big tech firms would probably be hammering out compliance issues with the EU over the coming months. "I think it's more a question of time to understand the scope of the legislation and have a dialogue with the commission," he said.

Musk has also threatened to sue Meta for stealing trade secrets and intellectual property, claims denied by the company. In a letter to Zuckerberg, published by the online news outlet Semafor this week, Musk's lawyer also accused the company of recruiting dozens of former Twitter employees who "had and continue to have access to Twitter's trade secrets and other highly confidential information". The two men have been bickering for years, but things have become heated since it became clear Meta intended to compete with Twitter. — AFP

during one of Lebanon's long power cuts. The bankrupt state provides just a handful of hours of electricity a day. Qadi uses thick thread and deftly sews stitches into a duvet spread out on the floor, other quilts folded and rolled up around him. "Most people patch things up" even if they are made cheaply, said Qadi, who is also an upholsterer. "The circumstances are extraordinary — unfortunately our currency has no value," he said, his glasses slipping down his nose as he worked.

Despite the crash, Lebanese officials have failed to enact reforms demanded by international donors that would unlock bail-out funds. Unemployment reached more than 29 percent last year, according to the World Bank. "We hope this situation will end because we're suffocating," Qadi said.

In a store bearing an old-fashioned hand-painted yellow "Repairs" sign, tailor Mohammed Muazzin, 67, works away, surrounded by spools of thread and clothes waiting for attention or ready for pickup. A woman in hijab and long robe holds up a dress to inspect Muazzin's adjustments, while another in a tank top and flowing hair waits to ask about repairing a pair of torn jeans. — AFP

International

Syria's proposed control on aid to rebel-held areas spark fears

Security Council fails to extend the mechanism

BEIRUT: The Syrian government recently announced it would allow aid to cross into rebel-held areas after a United Nations mechanism expired, sparking concerns from humanitarian groups. They worry over the fate of residents in Syria's last remaining rebel strongholds, in the north and northwest, after the Security Council failed on Wednesday to extend the mechanism. Under a 2014 deal, aid had largely passed through the Bab Al-Hawa crossing with Turkey without the authorization of Damascus. But expiry of the UN mechanism, as well as Syria's decision to change course on the delivery of aid to those areas, has sparked fears and questions among the humanitarian community.

What did Damascus propose?

Syria said it made a "sovereign decision" to allow aid to flow through the Bab Al-Hawa crossing for six months starting last Thursday. The crossing is the main entry point for aid to rebel-held areas, though it also occasionally trickles in from areas under the control of Damascus.

Following a February 6 earthquake that struck both northwest Syria and southern Turkey, Syrian authorities agreed to temporarily open two other border crossings with Turkey until August. Russia on Tuesday vetoed a proposal to extend the UN mechanism at Bab Al-Hawa for nine months, then failed to muster enough votes for an alternate proposal to extend it for six months. The UN expressed concerns over two "unacceptable conditions" set by Damascus for allowing aid to flow through the crossing, according to a document reviewed Friday by AFP.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said it was concerned that Damascus had "stressed that the United Nations should not communicate with entities designated as 'terrorist'". The second condition it bridled 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.

Roughly half of Idlib province and parts of neighboring provinces are controlled by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), considered a terrorist group by Damascus, as well as by the US and UN. About three million people, the majority of them displaced, live in areas controlled by HTS, while another 1.1 million are in zones under the control of Turkey-backed groups. Years of conflict have left much of the rebel-held areas - which host overcrowded camps for the displaced - in desperate need of aid as poverty and disease run rife.

What are the concerns?

The UN has described Damascus's conditions for reopening the Bab Al-Hawa crossing as "unacceptable". The OCHA document seen by AFP called for the need to "review" and "clarify" parts of Damascus' letter, saying the deliveries "must not infringe on the impartiality... neutrality, and independence of the United Nations' humanitarian operations". Several international organizations fear that allowing Damascus control over the flow of aid to rebel-held areas could result in limiting access to those most in need. The International Rescue Committee - one of the main aid organizations working in Idlib - said it continues to "emphasize the responsibilities of the Security Council to protect Syrians... and ensure lives are not put at risk".

MedGlobal, which operates clinics and vaccination drives in Idlib, warned that transfer of control of Bab Al-Hawa "from a neutral party (the UN) to a regime that slaughtered its people and displaced half of its population will lead to more death and suffering among innocent civilians and will trigger another refugee crisis". About half the residents of rebel-held areas are people displaced by Syria's 12 years of conflict that have killed more than half a million people.



BAB AL-HAWA BORDER CROSSING, Syria: A convoy carrying humanitarian aid arrives in Syria after crossing the Bab Al-Hawa border crossing with Turkey. — AFP

Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad has repeatedly said he is determined to regain control over those areas. Nick Heras, a researcher at the New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, told AFP that Damascus "is showing increased confidence in its ability to contain and, over time, shrink the rebel-ruled areas in northwest Syria". Syria, which in May regained its seat in the Arab League, wishes to "monitor the crossings" to rebel-held areas, Heras said, warning that soon "Assad and his allies will militarily force the issue".

Are there any alternatives?

Security Council members and other organizations are betting on a return to negotiations. The

Swiss ambassador to the world body said diplomats would "get back to work immediately to find a solution". Human Rights Watch's senior researcher on Syria, Hiba Zayadin, urged Security Council members to "return to the negotiating table and reach a consensus that puts Syrians' rights first". "Allowing Syria to dictate the flow of aid to areas beyond government control puts the lives, rights, and dignity of millions of Syrians at grave risk," she said. In Idlib, 46-year-old activist Abdel Wahab Elewi expressed his rejection of Damascus's control over the crossing, "even if they cut off aid to us". "Handing this issue over to Assad spells the beginning of the end and moving towards recognizing his regime," he said. — AFP

Turkey's quake survivors' latest menace - dust

SAMANDAG: The excavator tore into the remnants of the damaged building in southeast Turkey, bringing it crashing down into a cloud of dust — the latest menace facing survivors of the deadly February quake that ravaged the region. Extending to the horizon, a cocoon of fine grey dust envelops the city of Samandag in the south of Hatay province, devastated by the February 6 earthquake that killed more than 55,000 people and laid waste to parts of Turkey and Syria.

"We survived the earthquake but this dust will kill us," Michel Atik, founder and president of the Samandag Environmental Protection Association, said with a sigh. "We are going to die of respiratory diseases and lung cancer with all these hazardous materials." Five months after the quake, the scale of cleanup and reconstruction is enormous, with the government estimating that nearly 2.6 million buildings have been destroyed.

According to the UN Environment Program, some 210 million tons of rubble must be disposed of. By comparison, some 1.8 million tons of rubble had to be hauled away after the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York City that brought down the World Trade Center skyscrapers. Environmental activists and local residents worry that in the rush to clean up and rebuild, crucial safety measures are being ignored, with potentially adverse effects on the health of local residents, the environment and the economy.

Landfills

The landfill near Samandag is one of several that have been set up in this province bordering Syria. It lies next to the Mediterranean and the Milleyha natural bird reserve, which is natural bird reserve, which is a nesting site for endangered green sea turtles. Another



SAMANDAG: This aerial photograph shows excavators working on a landfill next to a beach in Samandag, in the south of the Hatay province. The excavator tore into the remnants of the damaged building in southeast Turkey, bringing them crashing down into a cloud of dust — the latest menace facing survivors of the deadly February quake that ravaged the region. — AFP

7.2 earthquake hits Alaskan peninsula

WASHINGTON: A 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck off the Alaskan peninsula late Saturday local time, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said, briefly sparking a tsunami warning. The USGS revised the quake's magnitude down from an initial 7.4. The shallow quake hit at 10:48 pm Saturday (0648 GMT Sunday), about 55 miles (89 kilometers) southwest of the small town of Sand Point, the agency said. The National Tsunami Warning Center in Palmer, Alaska, cancelled

landfill, in the Antakya region, lies near a valley of olive trees at the foot of the Nur Mountains. With olive oil the primary source of income in the province, there are fears that the dump could harm the trees.

"They don't even hose it down," said Cagdas Can, 33, an environmental activist with the Reconstruct group, as he watched trucks filled with debris leave Samandag toward the huge open-air landfill that lies next to one of Turkey's longest beaches. "There were other possible sites... But the companies that won the tenders (for clearing) chose here to save fuel," said Can. "All they care about it recovering the iron and the metal," he said.

"Nobody wears a mask. The demolition sites are not covered or hosed down and neither are the holds of the trucks, as required by law," he said. Can said that his environmental organization had tried to stop the trucks by forming human chains, "but the police intervened. Eighteen people were arrested and I had my collarbone broken," he said. The exhausted local population, faced with a myriad of problems after the quake, has not mobilized, he said, but they are as worried as the conservationists about the impact of the cleanup.

Hidden hazards

"The children are the first to be affected, they cough a lot, so do we. As soon as it's windy, everything is covered in dust," said Mithat Hoca, 64, who sells vegetables at a stall in central Samandag. "We have to cover everything," said Mehmet Yazici, a 61-year-old retiree who passed by on a scooter. "We wipe the table 15 to 20 times a day. You have to do it every half hour".

Ali Kanatli, a doctor in Antakya, some 26 kilometers (16 miles) away from Samandag, has already seen cases of "conjunctivitis, allergies, asthma, bronchitis." But above all, he worries about the long-term effects, like an increase in cancers, that the hazardous materials in the rubble and dust could cause in the region. Turkey did not ban asbestos until 2013 and most of the buildings affected by the quake are older, he said. "In addition to asbestos, we have lead in paint, heavy metals including mercury in electronic equipment such as televisions, household appliances", he said. — AFP



CHEONGJU: South Korean emergency workers search for survivors on a flooded road leading to an underground tunnel where some 19 cars were trapped by flood waters after heavy rains in Cheongju. — AFP

Heavy rains kill 37 in S Korea

CHEONGJU: Rescuers battled on Sunday to reach people trapped in a flooded tunnel in South Korea, where at least 37 people have died and nine are missing after heavy rains caused flooding and landslides. South Korea is at the peak of its summer monsoon season, and there has been heavy rainfall for the last four days, causing a major dam to overflow.

The interior ministry reported that 37 people were killed and another nine were missing nationwide in the heavy downpours, mostly buried by landslides or after falling into a flooded reservoir. Hundreds of rescue workers were still struggling to reach more than 10 cars and an unknown number of people trapped in a 430-metre (1,410-foot) underground tunnel in Cheongju, North Chungcheong province, the ministry said.

When AFP arrived at the site Sunday, rescue workers were trying to drain the tunnel to reach victims, but the water still appeared to be too deep, hampering search efforts. The tunnel was inundated on Saturday morning after floodwaters swept in too quickly for the vehicles inside to escape, according to the Yonhap news agency. Five people were rescued from a bus in the tunnel Saturday, and nine bodies have so far been pulled from the site, with divers working around the clock searching for more victims, the interior ministry said.

The police have received missing person reports for 11 people believed to be in the tunnel, but a final official toll has not yet been provided, as it is unclear how many people were in each car, Yonhap reported. "I have no hope but I can't leave," a parent of one of those missing in the tunnel told Yonhap. "My heart wrenches thinking how painful it must have been for my son in the cold water." 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 people inside.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who is currently on an overseas trip, held an emergency meeting with his aides on the government's response, his office said. Earlier, he ordered Prime Minister Han Duck-soo to mobilize all available resources to minimize casualties. The majority of the casualties — including 19 of the dead and eight of the missing — were from North Gyeongsang province, and were largely due to massive landslides in the mountainous area that engulfed houses with people inside. Some of the people who have been reported missing were swept away when a river overflowed in the province, the interior ministry said, and more than 1,500 people have been unable to return after evacuating from their homes. — AFP



TALLKAYF: Louis Raphael Sako, the Patriarch of the Chaldean Church in Iraq, leads a mass at the Sacred Heart Chaldean church in the city Tal Kaif, north of Mosul in this file photo. — AFP

Iraq patriarch leaves Baghdad as tensions with president soar

BAGHDAD: A prominent Iraqi Christian leader announced Saturday he would leave Baghdad for the autonomous Kurdistan region, denouncing the president's role in a "disgusting" campaign against him. Cardinal Louis Raphael Sako, the patriarch of Iraq's Chaldean Catholic Church and architect of Pope Francis' historic visit to the country in 2021, is a key interlocutor between the Iraqi government and its Christian minority. For several months, Sako has been embroiled in a war of words with a Christian lawmaker, Rayan Al-Kildani. Kildani is the leader of the Babylon Movement, whose armed wing is part of Hashed Al-Shaabi - a network of largely pro-Iran paramilitaries that were integrated into Iraqi security forces in recent years.

Tensions have intensified since early July, drawing in President Abdul Latif Rashid who cited constitutional grounds in a decision to revoke a presidential decree Sako deems pivotal for his official status and for the administration of church property. In a statement on Saturday, the cardinal condemned the government's "silence" over what he described as a campaign against him by the Babylon Movement. He has "decided to withdraw from the seat of the patriarchate in Baghdad", the statement said, and would instead settle at one of the monasteries in Kurdistan, in Iraq's north.

In early July, the president cancelled the 2013 decree recognizing Sako as head of the Chaldean Church and allowing him to administer the community's endowment. The presidency justified the move at the time in a number of statements arguing the decree had no "constitutional or legal basis" as the president "only issues appointment decrees for employees of government institutions". Rashid has rejected claims this was an attack on the Christian leader. The decision "is not intended to undermine the religious or legal stature of the cardinal," the president said.

Sako on Saturday dubbed the tensions a "disgusting game", sarcastically suggesting the "protector of the constitution" - President Rashid - entrust the administration of the church's assets to Kildani and his brothers. In a country ravaged by repeated conflicts and plagued by endemic corruption, Sako and Kildani have both accused each other of illegally seizing Christian-owned properties. Kildani, who has been under US sanctions since 2019, accuses the cardinal of assuming a political role beyond his religious mandate.

Sako, in turn, says the parliamentarian aims to gain legitimacy as the sole representative of the Christian community. Iraq's Christian population has drastically declined since the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled strongman Saddam Hussein, dropping from more than 1.5 million people to around 400,000 today. Many have fled the violence that has plagued the country over the past 20 years. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, JULY 17, 2023

Ukraine aid is the best boost for global economy: Yellen

Deep mistrust quietly pulling Global North and South apart: Banga

GANDHINAGAR, India: Redoubling support for war-stricken Ukraine is the "single best" way to aid the global economy, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Sunday, along with boosting emerging economies and tackling debt distress. Yellen also said on the sidelines of a G20 finance ministers' summit in India she would "push back" on criticism there was a tradeoff between aid to Ukraine and developing nations.

"Ending this war is first and foremost a moral imperative," she told reporters in Gandhinagar. "But it's also the single best thing we can do for the global economy." Yellen also pointed to efforts to tackle debt distress faced by struggling economies, bank reform and a global tax deal, and warned it was "premature" to talk of lifting tariffs on China. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, both global breadbaskets that together exported almost a quarter of the world's wheat supply, triggered shockwaves in economies worldwide by sending prices for food and fuel shooting up.

Japan's Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki, speaking after a G7 meeting of ministers, "reconfirmed the G7's unshakable support" to Ukraine. "We confirmed that Russia-owned assets that are under the G7's supervision would not be transferred until Russia pays damages to Ukraine," Suzuki said, adding that Moscow should also "pay long-term reconstruction costs". Any discussion on Ukraine is awkward for G20 host India, which has not condemned Russia's invasion but is also part of the Quad grouping alongside Australia, the United States and Japan.

'Deep mistrust'

Yellen also cited debt restructuring progress in

Zambia, which she discussed with Chinese officials in Beijing last week, and said she expected Ghana and Sri Lanka debt treatments would be finalized soon.

She said it was still too soon to lift restrictions placed on China during a trade war launched by former US president Donald Trump. "Tariffs were put in place because we had concerns with unfair trade practices on China's side, and our concerns with those practices remain, they really haven't been addressed," Yellen said.

"Perhaps over time this is an area where we could make progress, but I'd say it is premature to use this as an area for de-escalation." Yellen pointed to other work tackling debt distress and the reform of multilateral development banks, including the World Bank and other regional lenders, in efforts she said could unlock \$200 billion over the next decade.

More than half of all low-income countries are near or in debt distress, double the case in 2015, she said. G20 finance chiefs and central bank heads are due to meet on Monday and Tuesday in Gandhinagar in Gujarat, the state where India's independence leader Mahatma Gandhi was born.

'Prison of poverty'

World Bank chief Ajay Banga warned of a "deep mistrust... quietly pulling the Global North and South apart" over issues such as the climate change crisis, post-pandemic recovery efforts, the war in Ukraine and a lack of progress in the fight against poverty. "The Global South's frustration is understandable," Banga said in an op-ed. "In many ways they are paying the price for the prosperity of others. When they should be ascendant, they're concerned promised resources will be diverted to Ukraine's recon-



GANDHINAGAR: World Bank chief Ajay Banga (right) addresses media representatives as US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen watches after interacting with students at a school on the sidelines of a G20 finance ministers' summit in Gandhinagar on July 16, 2023. — AFP

struction; they feel aspirations are being constrained because energy rules aren't applied universally, and they're worried a burgeoning generation will be locked into a prison of poverty."

The International Monetary Fund said finding common efforts to tackle the weak global economy would be crucial. "The world will be looking for joint

action to address rising economic fragmentation, slowing growth, and high inflation," the IMF said in a statement ahead of the meeting.

The G20 will also discuss cryptocurrency regulations, as well as making access to financing to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change easier for developing nations. — AFP

UAE, India set to use dirham, rupee for trade

ABU DHABI: The UAE and India signed agreements for establishing a framework to promote the use of the UAE dirham and the Indian rupee for cross-border transactions and cooperation for interlinking their payment and messaging systems. The agreements were signed by Khaled Balam, Governor of the Central Bank of the UAE, and Shaktikanta Das, Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. The signing of these agreements was witnessed by UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was on a day-long visit to the Gulf country on his way back from France.

The agreement aims to put in place a local currency settlement system (LCSS) to promote the use of the Indian rupee and the dirham bilaterally, the RBI said in a statement on its website.

The governors of the RBI and the Central Bank of the UAE signed two memoranda of understanding (MoUs). The first agreement between the RBI and the UAE Central Bank will establish a framework to "promote the use of local currencies (rupee and dirham) for cross border transactions", India's external affairs ministry said in a statement.

The other MoU between the two central banks is aimed at interlinking their "payment and messaging systems", the Ministry said. "The leaders expressed their interest in strengthening cooperation in the payment systems area by enabling integration between cross-border transactions between the UAE and India more efficiently. Such cooperation will also include the mutual acceptance of domestic card schemes by interlinking national card switches. Integration between



ABU DHABI: Governors of the Reserve Bank of India and the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates exchange MoUs as Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan look on in Abu Dhabi on July 15, 2023. — AFP

these systems will enhance access to payment services for the benefit of the citizens and residents of the two countries," a joint statement issued after the visit read.

Apart from the MoUs on trade in local currencies, the two leaders also witnessed the signing of an MoU on establishing a branch of the Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi in Abu Dhabi. Modi also met Dr Sultan Al-Jaber, president-designate of CoP28 and Group CEO of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company.

This was the fifth visit by Modi to the UAE. India-UAE trade rose to \$85 billion in 2022. According to the External Affairs Ministry, UAE is India's third-largest trading partner for 2022-23 and India's second-largest export destination. The discussion also included the agenda of the groupings such as the I2U2 (India, the Zionist entity, UAE and USA) and the UAE-France-India trilateral cooperation under which

both sides are in collaboration with other powers.

"Creation of the LCSS would enable exporters and importers to invoice and pay in their respective domestic currencies, which in turn would enable the development of an INR-AED foreign exchange market." India could make its first rupee payment for UAE oil to Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, Reuters reported on Friday. This arrangement would promote investments and remittances between the countries, the regulator said. Use of local currencies help to optimize transaction costs and settlement time for transactions, including for remittances from Indians residing in the UAE, it said. The two countries also agreed to cooperate on linking their fast payment systems — India's Unified Payments Interface with the UAE's Instant Payment Platform — to ease cross-border money transfers. — Agencies

UK signs up to trans-Pacific trading bloc

LONDON: The UK government on Sunday hailed what it said was its biggest trade deal since Brexit, as it formally signed a treaty to join a major Indo-Pacific bloc. Business and Trade Secretary Kemi Badenoch signed the accession protocol for the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in New Zealand.

It makes the United Kingdom the first new member and first European nation to join the bloc since it was created in 2018. The CPTPP comprises the UK's fellow G7 members Canada and Japan, plus long-standing allies Australia and New Zealand, alongside Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. It has been seen as a bulwark against Chinese dominance in the region, although Beijing has applied to join.

Badenoch said in an interview with Sky News that the deal showed the UK "looking outwards towards the world". "We have a seat at the table in the fastest-growing region, countries are queuing up (to join)," she added. "I'm really excited that we've brought home the biggest trade deal since we left the European Union."

London has been pushing a "Global Britain" strategy since formally severing nearly 50 years of ties with its nearest neighbors in the European Union three years ago. Sunday's signing at a CPTPP meeting in Auckland was the formal confirmation of the agreement for UK membership after nearly two years of talks. The government said it will cut tariffs for UK exports to CPTPP countries, which with UK membership will have a combined GDP of £12 trillion (\$15.7 trillion), and account for 15 percent of global GDP.

It will give British businesses trade access to a market of more than 500 million people and access to the wider region, it added. The agreement is expected to come into force in the second half of next year, after parliamentary scrutiny and legislation.

UK accession to the CPTPP — the successor to a previous trans-Pacific trade pact that the United States withdrew from in 2017 under president Donald Trump — has, however, been met with a mixed reception. For Brexit supporters, it has been seen as a chance for the UK to join other trading blocs with faster-growing economies than those closer to home — and boost the country's international geopolitical and economic clout.

But critics say it will struggle to compensate for the economic damage sustained by leaving the 27-member EU — the world's largest trading bloc and collective economy. The UK already has trade deals with 10 of the 11 other CPTPP members, and analysts estimate the eventual economic boost to the country is £1.8 billion (\$2.2 billion) — a 0.08 percent annual GDP increase.

The government's spending watchdog, the Office for Budget Responsibility, in April forecast that London's Brexit deal with Brussels will reduce long-term productivity by 4.0 percent compared to when the UK was a member. A key UK government pledge to sign a prized free-trade deal with the United States remains elusive, and Badenoch assessed the chances of securing one currently were "very low". — AFP

As climate changes, farms in US 'Peach State' Georgia suffer

CONCORD, US: From a distance, everything looks normal: neat rows of peach trees, their green leaves fluttering in the wind, near a pretty little American farmhouse. But Georgia farmer Stuart Gregg searched in vain among the branches, unable to find a single piece of fruit.

"We have no harvest this year," he said. Gregg's prized peaches, like those on farms across Georgia, have been decimated, a rare event for the southern state that is so closely associated with the fruit that it is nicknamed the "Peach State." Last winter was unusually mild, causing peach blossoms to bloom early. But then in March, temperatures dropped below freezing, far too cold for the delicate buds.

"When we started checking that, one peach blossom open, dead, one peach blossom open, dead. We hate to see that," Gregg told AFP. Just three days of frost was enough to kill off the entire crop. Of the approximately 70 acres (28 hectares) cultivated by Gregg Farms, a family operation in Concord, a handful of fallen pits are all Gregg has to show for this season's harvest.



CONCORD, US: Farmer Stuart Gregg looks through a barren peach tree on the family farm in Concord, Georgia, on July 12, 2023, after Pike County's peach crop failed to survive the frost and frigid temperatures that hit the area in mid to late March. — AFP photos

Unprecedented in 20 years, it is a "six-figure" loss, he said. Reluctantly, the family decided not to open their fields this summer to customers, who usually come to pick peaches or enjoy ice cream. At the farm's entrance, a large red sign invites them to come back "in 2024." This year, around 90 percent of the peach harvest in the state has been lost, experts say. They warn that this will happen more often due to climate change. Eventually, some types of peaches that need a cold winter "will not be able to be grown in Georgia at all," said Pam Knox, an agricultural cli-



GRIFFIN: Dario Chavez, Associate Professor of Horticulture at the University of Georgia, holds a peach rootstock split in two on the University of Georgia Griffin Campus in Griffin.

matologist at the University of Georgia.

The sweet and juicy fruit has long been an institution in the state. "Nothing beats a Georgia peach," Gregg said proudly. The peach appears on license plates, on restaurant menus, just about everywhere — except, this year, on peach trees. To help local producers, Dario Chavez, a horticulture professor specializing in peaches, is developing new hybrid varieties better adapted to mild winters. "You basically do matchmaking," said the scientist who lives, appropriately enough, in Peachtree City. — AFP

Business

Generative AI could help GCC reap \$23.5bn in benefits by 2030: Report

Saudi, UAE to benefit the most; Kuwait's economy may gain \$1.6bn

ABU DHABI: Gulf countries are likely to reap about \$23.5 billion in economic benefits by 2030 as investments in generative artificial intelligence continue to grow, according to a report.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE are set to benefit the most from the growth in the emerging technology, PwC unit Strategy & Middle East said in a report on Thursday.

Saudi Arabia is projected to benefit the most from generative AI's "extraordinary" potential economic impact in the region, underpinned by growing investments in the region, according to the consultancy. The region could realize about \$9.9 of economic growth for every \$1 invested into the technology, the pace of which could

unlock \$23.5 billion per year by 2030, the report said.

The kingdom, which has been heavily investing in its technology ecosystem, is projected to reap more than half of that amount, or \$12.2 billion. The UAE, which has also been boosting its initiatives to adopt the latest innovations, has the next biggest potential with \$5.3 billion, the report found. Estimated economic gains for the rest of the GCC countries are \$2.6 billion for Qatar, \$1.6 billion for Kuwait, \$1.3 billion for Oman and \$600 million for Bahrain.

"These statistics underline the extraordinary potential of generative AI to revolutionise the Middle East's business landscape," said Tony Karam, partner at Strategy & Middle East,

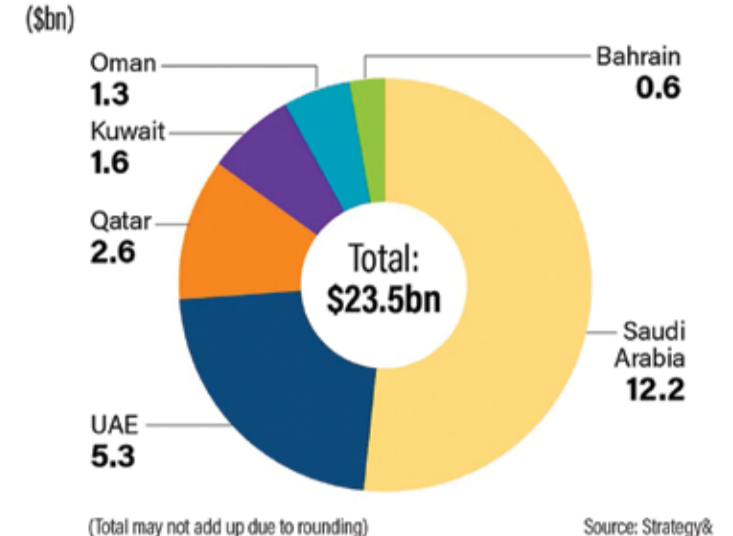
wrote in the report. "Executives who seize this opportunity without delay can gain a substantial competitive advantage, while companies that merely watch risk falling behind."

AI has long been used by businesses in their operations, but it has gained momentum with the advent of generative AI. The technology — made popular by ChatGPT, created by Microsoft-baked OpenAI — can produce various kinds of data, including audio, code, images, text, simulations, 3D objects and videos. Investors have put more than \$4.2 billion into generative AI start-ups in 2021 and 2022 through 215 deals after interest surged in 2019, recent data from CB Insights showed.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE,

the Arab world's biggest economies, have introduced several initiatives to promote the use of technology as they prepare for the future economy. Companies in the kingdom are moving faster when it comes to adopting cutting-edge technologies compared to their global counterparts, consultancy KPMG said in a recent report. On a global level, the growing adoption of AI technology can help boost economic growth and raise labor productivity, Goldman Sachs said in a previous report. Widespread AI adoption can eventually grow annual global gross domestic product by 7 percent in the 10 years after at least half of companies worldwide begin using AI technology, the US bank said. — Agencies

ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT OF GENERATIVE AI IN GCC COUNTRIES BY 2030



SAN FRANCISCO: A Cruise technician removes a cone from the hood of a disabled self-driving robotaxi in San Francisco, California on July 11, 2023. A driverless taxi slows down in a dark San Francisco street and is quickly surrounded by a group of masked figures. — AFP

Race for robo-taxis cleaves sharp divide over safety

SAN FRANCISCO: A driverless taxi slows down on a dark San Francisco street and is quickly surrounded by a group of masked figures. One of them places a traffic cone on the hood of the car. Its hazard lights flick on, and the car stops in the middle of the road, disabled.

This bizarre scene has been repeated dozens of times across the US tech capital this past week—the work of activists protesting against the proliferation of robot cars, which they consider unsafe.

"We believe that all cars are bad, no matter who or what is driving," said the activist, who asked to be referred to by the pseudonym Alex to protect his identity. His anti-car activist group, "Safe Street Rebel," is radically pro-pedestrian and pro-bike, and not impressed by widespread claims that driverless cars are a "new revolutionary mode of transportation."

Alex sees their arrival "just as another way to entrench car dominance." Using traffic cones stolen from the streets, the activists have been disabling driverless taxis operated by Waymo and Cruise—the only two companies currently authorized in San Francisco. Their resistance has gone viral online, racking up millions of views on social networks at a time when state authorities are mulling the expansion of driverless taxi operations in the city to a full 24-hour paid service. The proposal by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), which oversees autonomous taxis in the state, would allow Waymo and Cruise to directly compete with ride-sharing apps such as Uber or Lyft—but without drivers.

'Hasty decision'

But the issue has caused friction between state and city officials. Driverless cars were first introduced in San Francisco in 2014 with a mandatory human "safety driver" on board. Four years later, California scrapped its requirement for a human driver to be in the car, meaning it is no longer the stuff of sci-fi to cruise past a Jaguar without a driver on the streets.

But lately, San Francisco officials are worried by an increasing number of incidents involving autonomous cars. Allowing robots to take the wheel has led to cars getting stuck in the middle of roads, blocking bus lanes or even interfering in a police crime scene.

No fatal accidents involving humans and Cruise or Waymo vehicles have been recorded, though a Waymo taxi was reported in June to have killed a dog that ran into the street.

City supervisor Aaron Peskin condemned the CPUC's "hasty decision" to allow a "massive ramp-up" of driverless taxis on San Francisco's streets. The San Francisco County Transportation Authority sent a letter to the CPUC, detailing 92 incidents involving autonomous taxis last year.

And the mounting controversy seems to be having some effect. A critical decision by the CPUC on whether to further expand Waymo and Cruise's services was due by the end of June, but has been postponed twice, now to August 10. For now, Cruise is only authorized to charge customers for routes driven between 10 pm and 6 am. Waymo cannot charge for rides without a human driver on board. — AFP

GCC, India likely to conclude FTA talks soon

NEW DELHI: The Gulf Cooperation Council and India have resumed discussions on the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) at the 6th India Arab Partnership conference and a conclusion of the agreement is expected to become a reality soon, bringing new opportunities for businesses on both sides, according to a senior Indian government official.

Under the aegis of the Arab-Indian Cooperation Forum, the 6th India-Arab Partnership Conference on "New Horizons in Investment, Trade & Services" was organized in New Delhi on July 11 and 12. Ministers, senior officials and businesspersons from the GCC countries and India participated in it.

"India and GCC have resumed discussions on concluding the Free Trade Agreement. We have exchanged preliminary documents, and the delegations have been meeting. We hope this will soon become a reality, bringing newer opportunities for businesses on both sides," ANI, an India-based news agency, quoting Ahsan Ali, secretary (CPV & OIA), Ministry of External Affairs, India, said.

In addition, the secretary also mentioned the

discussions on exploring alternative forms of trading with GCC nations. "There are discussions with our bilateral partners, talks about rupee trading, barter trading and many other things, especially under the circumstances where most countries are facing challenges of foreign currency," he said.

The conference is the flagship initiative of both sides to provide an institutional platform for robust engagement between the business communities. The previous five editions of the conference have guided in laying the foundations of a roadmap and synergizing the economic cooperation between India and the League of Arab States (LAS) countries.

V Muraleedharan, India's minister of state for External Affairs (MoS) inaugurated the conference and delivered a keynote address. From the Arab side, the conference was led by Ambassador Ali Ibrahim Al-Malki, Assistant Secretary General, head of the Economic Affairs Sector of the League of Arab States headquarters who gave a welcome address.

The conference was rich in content with the inaugural session at ministerial-level, followed by special sessions in which discussions were held on investment climates and opportunities, the ANI added. The speakers elaborated on the present state of India-Arab cooperation in various sectors including healthcare, food and energy security and resilient supply chain and means to further enhance them, including by sharing expertise and

best practices. The meeting also stressed the important role of the private sector to push trade and investment relations to wider horizons.

The conference was jointly organized by the Ministry of External Affairs, government of India and the LAS, in partnership with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Federation of Arab Businessmen (FAB) and Union of Arab Chambers (UAC). In conclusion, the participants conveyed their sincere appreciation to all stakeholders for the excellent coordination in putting together a substantive program. They agreed to convene the seventh edition of the IAPC in the Arab country in the year 2025. India and the GCC agreed to resume negotiations for a free trade agreement in November last year. Two rounds of FTA negotiations were held earlier in 2006 and 2008 between India and GCC. India imports predominantly crude oil and natural gas from the Gulf nations exports pearls, precious and semi-precious stones; metals; imitation jewelry; electrical machinery; iron and steel; and chemicals to these countries. — Agencies



Ahsan Ali

Tesla rolls out its first electric pickup, Cybertruck

NEW YORK: US automaker Tesla on Saturday announced that its first electric pickup—a sleek-looking silver Cybertruck—had rolled off the assembly line at its huge plant near Austin, Texas. "First Cybertruck built at Giga Texas!" says a tweet from the company, accompanied by a photo of the futuristic vehicle amid a sea of helmeted and yellow-vested Tesla workers.

Elon Musk, who owns both Tesla and Twitter, reposted the tweet with the comment "Congrats Tesla Team." Tesla did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment on Saturday. The company had promised in April that it would be rolling out the first Cybertrucks before the end of the year.

Plans for the vehicle, with its silvery, tortoise-like shape and unusual angles, were first announced in November 2019. Its original introduction went awry when Musk urged a Tesla employee to strike one of the prototype's windows with a hunk of steel to show its solidity. The window broke—drawing a laugh and a curse word from Musk—as did a second window on an ensuing attempt. Yet within two days, Tesla said it had received nearly 150,000 advance orders.



HAWTHORNE, US: Tesla co-founder and CEO Elon Musk introduces the newly unveiled all-electric battery-powered Tesla Cybertruck at Tesla Design Center in Hawthorne, California. — AFP

In May, Musk said the company hoped to build 250,000 of the trucks a year—a number he said could eventually double, given a relatively accessible price tag. Tesla will be making three models of the Cybertruck, a vehicle that can accelerate from

zero to 60 miles per hour (100 kilometers per hour) in less than three seconds. The basic model will cost \$39,900 and offer a 250-mile range between charges; the top-line truck will have twice that range and sell for \$69,900. — AFP

Airlines grapple with rise in unruly fliers

PARIS: Viral videos of vulgar, intoxicated and violent airplane passengers have become common, but it is not just a social media trend: statistics confirm cases are on the rise.

The surge in incidents comes as the aviation industry is bouncing back from the COVID pandemic, with airlines expecting to fly a near-record 4.35 billion passengers this year. According to the airline industry trade group IATA, one in every 568 flights had an incident linked to an unruly passenger in 2022, compared to one flight in 835 flights in 2021.

"Although non-compliance incidents initially fell after the mask mandates were removed on most flights, the frequency began to rise again throughout 2022 and ended the year some 37 percent up on 2021," IATA said recently. The most common in-

cidents involved passengers smoking or vaping in the cabin or toilet, refusing to buckle their seatbelt, failing to respect baggage limits and storage instructions and consumption of their own alcohol on board.

While incidents of physical aggression remain rare—only one flight in 17,200 in 2022 -- that represents a 61 percent jump from the previous year. The United States saw a tenfold rise in violent incidents from 2017 to 2021 to 6,000, with the politicization of mask wearing during the pandemic responsible for many confrontations. "This was a crazy time, people did a lot of strange things," said JetBlue CEO Robin Hayes. "That has come back down a lot since the masking rules went away, it's still slightly elevated compared to 2019 but it's largely back to normal," he added.

But Federal Aviation Administration data shows that in the first half of this year, incidents were nearly double the pre-pandemic rate. And this is despite the FAA's "zero tolerance" policy towards unruly passengers, imposing \$8.4 million in fines last year

on passengers, who sometimes risked criminal prosecution as well.

For the European Aviation Safety Agency, the rate of incidents has fallen since peaking in the pandemic, but the seriousness of the issues "seems to have increased considerably".

The reasons most often cited are the stress of travelling, less personal space on planes, smoking bans and alcohol abuse. An Air Caraïbes steward testified in a 2022 trial that he once confiscated 31 bottles of alcohol during boarding.

Psychology, handcuffs and diversions

"We see a lot more angry passengers generally and that matches very much what the police services say they see in the wider population everywhere," said EASA's head of safety promotion, John Franklin, during a recent webinar. This "doesn't necessarily make us feel any better, but it's not just an aviation problem". Undercover officers often travel on routes where there are frequent problems, but for the

most part, it is cabin crew who have to handle problem passengers.

They are trained in psychology to de-escalate situations, as well as self-defence.

If dialogue and warnings fail, airplanes are equipped with plastic handcuffs to restrain uncontrollable passengers in their seats. As a last resort, the captain can divert the plane and make all passengers disembark. Some countries like France are increasing the financial penalties for unruly behavior.

Failure to obey the cabin crew's orders can incur a fine of 10,000 euros (\$11,200), or even double for repeat offenders. Putting the safety of the aircraft in jeopardy can result in a fine of up to 75,000 euros, a four-year flight ban and a five-year jail term. IATA wants changes that facilitate the prosecution of offenders on international routes. Jurisdiction is determined by the registration country of the aircraft, which leaves the authorities of the country where the plane lands with no power to prosecute an unruly passenger. — AFP

NBK publishes its annual sustainability report 2022

Report offers an overview of banks' new ESG strategy framework

Isam Al-Sager

- The report was meticulously prepared in accordance with internationally recognized standards, including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)
- NBK's Sustainability Report 2022 marks a significant milestone in sustainable banking initiatives

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has recently released its "2022 Annual Sustainability Report", marking a significant milestone in its sustainability endeavors. This year's report adopts a new methodology that provides valuable insights and showcases a range of key initiatives, underscoring the bank's unwavering dedication to securing a sustainable future.

The Seventh Annual Sustainability Report 2022 marks a significant shift from NBK's prior reports by offering a comprehensive insight into the Group's innovative ESG Strategy Framework and its strategic approach to sustainability. This approach seeks to positively influence the communities it serves, promote sustainable growth, and uphold the highest global reporting and disclosure standards.

The report also presents a holistic perspective on NBK's fundamental ESG issues, risks, and performance data. It goes beyond that by encompassing the Group's ESG-related policies, strategies, and commitments throughout 2022. The newly approved ESG strategy is centered around four pillars, which take center stage in the Sustainability Report 2022. Additionally, this report adheres to various sustainability reporting standards and frameworks, along with national and global environmental, social, and governance standards, including the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB), and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). Moreover, NBK externally verified its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions data for the year ended 31 December 2022 and the reports alignment with the GRI standards.

The GHG audit certificate in the bank's sustainability report verified that NBK's reported GHG emissions are in line with GHG protocol. It also highlighted the



Isam Al-Sager

evaluation process which rigorously assessed the accuracy and credibility of NBK's environmental impact data. Moreover, the bank obtained an independent audit to ensure alignment with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards. NBK's exceptional accomplishment establishes its unique position as the pioneer and sole organization in Kuwait to undergo an external assessment of its sustainability report. This achievement significantly bolsters the bank's credibility and is a testament to its unwavering dedication to adhering to international standards and frameworks.

Moreover, the report emphasizes NBK's significant accomplishments in the field of ESG. Notably, the bank received a score of 'C' from CDP, a global non-profit that runs the world's leading environmental disclosure platform, for its



Climate Change and Forests 2022 Categories. The bank has also made notable strides in responsible banking services, as exemplified by the introduction of its Sustainable Financing Framework. NBK has also set interim goals to reduce its total operational emissions by 25% by 2025, relative to the base year levels of 2021. These achievements reflect NBK's commitment to environmental sustainability and responsible practices.

The report further showcased the NBK's commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, mainly through its emphasis on talent development. Additionally, the report highlighted the bank's substantial community investment, reaching a total of KD23 million. These initiatives exemplify the bank's dedication to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, nurturing talent, and making significant contributions to the community.

Commenting on releasing this year's issue of the Sustainability Report, Isam J Al-Sager, NBK Group Vice Chairman

and CEO, said, "this year's sustainability report is a testament to our unwavering dedication to sustainable practices. It brings a renewed approach and perspective, shedding light on NBK's new sustainability strategy and its dedication to fostering positive change. This commitment extends beyond the bank itself, aiming to positively impact our societies. Our commitment is further affirmed by our announcement to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060 and joining the United Nations Global Compact initiative."

"The report places emphasis on the ongoing progress made by the bank in its ESG priorities. These efforts are aimed at fostering a sustainable and inclusive future, demonstrating NBK's commitment to responsible practices across these key areas," Al-Sager added.

Al-Sager also highlighted the bank's support of clear and transparent ESG disclosures, emphasizing the importance of utilizing frameworks that enable comparability across different sectors and adhere to globally recognized standards.

NBK also conducts external audits to facilitate the broader adoption of sustainable banking standards in Kuwait and the region. "This commitment underscores our dedication to promoting accountability and driving sustainable practices in the banking industry," Al-Sager confirmed.

"At NBK, we firmly believe that sustainability is integral to our long-term success. We are truly committed to positively impacting the environment and society, recognizing that these efforts will ultimately benefit our shareholders and clients. By prioritizing sustainability, NBK aims to create value beyond financial returns, embracing a broader responsibility to contribute to a more sustainable and prosperous future," Al-Sager concluded.

The four pillars of NBK's ESG strategy framework are:

1. Governance for resilience;
2. Responsible banking;
3. Capitalizing on our capabilities; and
4. Investing in our communities.

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

Cooling inflation boosts bets on US Fed pause

KUWAIT: Cooling US inflation accelerated the decline in the greenback, benefiting risk assets around the world. The dollar is down nearly 3.9 percent YTD and is trading 13 percent lower than its peak in 2022. The decline provided relief to the Japanese yen which gained 2.4 percent last week, turning from one of the worst performing currencies in 2023 to one of the best in the past week. Weakness in the Yen has been challenging for Japan's import-reliant economy, leading to expectations Japan would again intervene in markets to support its currency. The euro and pound jumped to levels not seen since Q1 of 2022, ending the week at 1.1231 and 1.3092 respectively.

As the dollar traded near 15-month lows, the MSCI World Equity index rose to its highest so far this year. Meanwhile Treasury yields eased in recent days, with the 2-year return dropping to 4.75 percent and the 10-year down to 3.82 percent. In commodities, oil priced edged higher on the bullish sentiment over US demand, while gold prices ended the week 1.6 percent higher as the lower dollar increased the metal's attractiveness for other currency holders.

Annual inflation at 3%

US inflation rose just 0.2 percent m/m in June versus forecasts of a 0.3 percent gain. Annually, the consumer price index increased 3 percent, marking its slowest pace since March 2021 when price increases were running at a more than 40-year high. Stripping out volatile items, the core CPI rose 4.8 percent y/y and 0.2 percent m/m versus respective estimates of 5 percent and 0.3 percent. Fed officials expect inflation will continue to drop, particularly as costs ease for shelter, which

Losses stack up for FTC's Khan in US crackdown

WASHINGTON: FTC chairman Lina Khan is on a mission to embolden US competition enforcers, but a series of court defeats has sowed doubt that she will put an end to decades of Washington's light-touch approach to antitrust regulation. The Biden administration official was handed her latest loss when a

federal court on Tuesday threw out her agency's objection to Microsoft's \$69 billion buyout of video game giant Activision, calling the FTC's arguments short of compelling. Khan's Federal Trade Commission had suffered an earlier defeat in the same San Francisco courtroom, when a judge said the FTC's opposition to Facebook-owner Meta buying Within, a VR software company, was out of bounds. "We fight hard when we believe there was a law violation, and unfortunately things don't always go our way," Khan said during a heated question-and-answer hearing in US

Congress on Thursday.

US President Joe Biden in 2021 plucked Khan from the hallways of US academia to lead the agency in charge of safeguarding the interest of consumers and preserving a level playing field for businesses. "They are out on the frontier of antitrust," said John Lopatka, from Penn State's School of Law on Khan's fresh approach to enforcing competition policy.

"It's just that the courts are not that receptive," he added. Khan is just 34 years old and made a name for herself in antitrust circles when she published a paper as a Yale Law

student in 2017 that argued that competition laws were no longer fit for purpose in the age of Big Tech.

The paper, titled "Amazon's Antitrust Paradox," said that the current policy was ill-equipped to deal with the rise of online platforms, which had a unique ability to snuff out competition across a wide range of businesses. Her celebrated paper was a retort to a seminal work by conservative scholar Robert Bork that said enforcers of fair competition should leave mergers alone unless a clear risk of higher prices and a threat to consumers could be proven. — AFP

UK economy shrinks

Britain's economy shrank by 0.1 percent in May after a hit to activity from multiple bank holidays, including King Charles's coronation. The Office for National Statistics said that gross domestic product fell after registering growth of 0.2 percent in April, as some industries were affected by one fewer working day than normal. Britain's economy has lagged behind most other advanced economies.

The figures come as the Bank of England prepares to raise interest rate for a 14th consecutive time amid growing concern over elevated inflation. UK Chancellor Jeremy Hunt said the best way to get growth going again was to ease pressure on households by bringing down inflation. "While an extra bank holiday had an impact on growth in May, high inflation remains a drag anchor on economic growth," he said. The economy has performed better than expected in recent months, aided by falling global energy prices, rising consumer confidence and a strong jobs market. Late last year, economists expected the UK would be in recession by now. Instead, the economy grew by 0.1 percent over the first quarter, matching the performance in the final quarter of 2022.

Kuwaiti dinar

USD/KWD closed last week at 0.30630.



BEIJING: People carry umbrellas as they walk across an overpass on a rainy day in Beijing on July 13, 2023. — AFP

'Artificially high' growth predicted for China in Q2

BEIJING: China's economic growth is expected to have surged in the second quarter, an AFP survey has forecast, but analysts say Monday's figures will be misleadingly inflated given the low base of comparison with pandemic-ravaged 2022. A year ago, with restrictions such as sudden lockdowns, travel curbs and factory shutdowns the norm, China posted 0.4 percent on-year growth, one of its lowest quarterly readings in recent years.

This year, an average of predictions from a group of 13 experts interviewed by AFP suggested the economy expanded 7.1 percent in April-June.

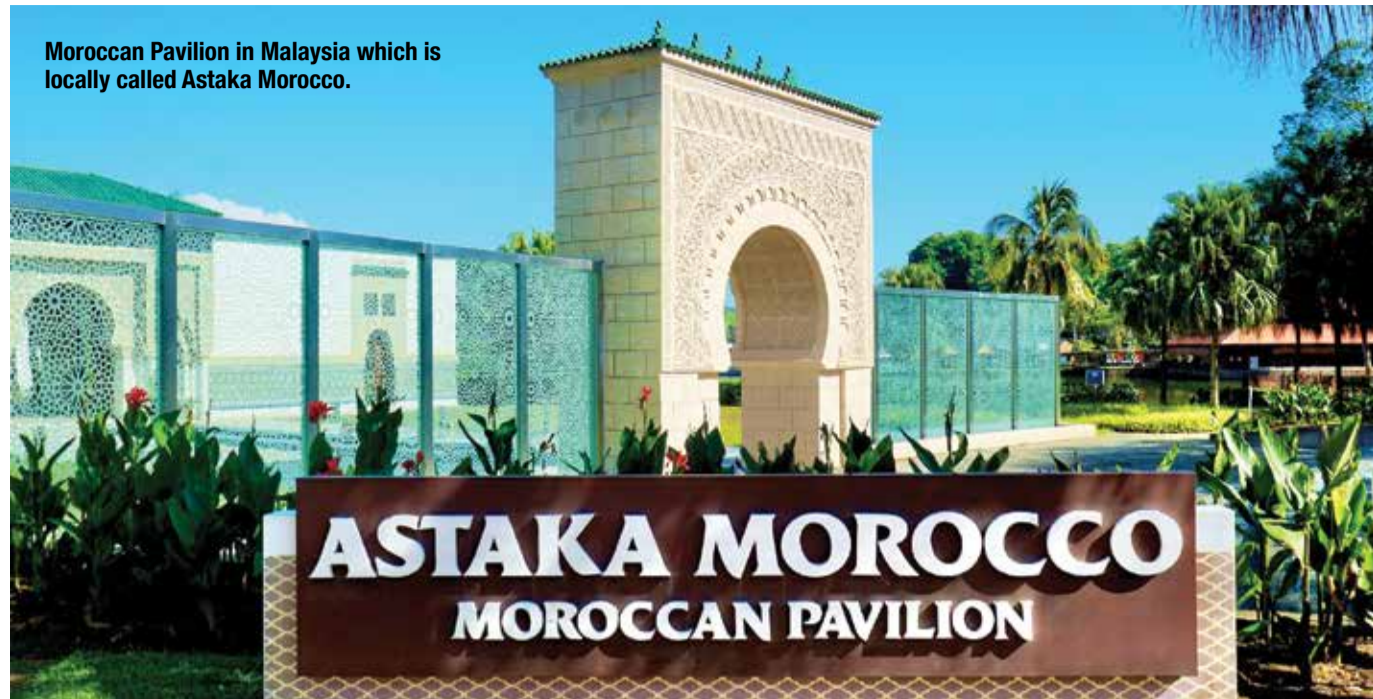
But this figure is "artificially high because of the low base" in 2022, said Gene Ma from the Institute of International Finance. The same period last year notably included a lockdown in Shanghai that saw the financial capital of 25 million people completely closed off for two months.

The quarter-on-quarter growth figures, which will also be released on Monday, should give a more realistic view of the world's second largest economy.

In the first three months of this year, it grew 4.5 percent on-year, reflecting a resurgence in activity after the abrupt end of the zero-COVID policy in December. But the recovery, which has been slow to take hold in some sectors, appears to already be running out of steam.

'Afraid to open wallets'

Despite the post-pandemic reopening, a sluggish job market and general uncertainty over the future mean consumer confidence is at a low. "From holiday travel to shopping for cars and homes, the macroeconomic data shows Chinese people are now just afraid to open their wallets too widely," said the independent Hinrich Foundation's Stewart Paterson. — AFP



Moroccan Pavilion in Malaysia which is locally called Astaka Morocco.



Fountains in Moroccan Pavilion in Malaysia.

Moroccan Pavilion in Malaysia symbolizes cultural exchange at tourist destination



Detailed decorations inside the main building of the Pavilion.

The Moroccan Pavilion in Malaysia, which is locally called Astaka Morocco, is a symbol of cultural exchange between both countries, as it sheds light on Moroccan and Islamic architecture and heritage and has become a crucial tourist destination for enthusiasts of culture, history and photography as part of their tour at the Malaysian administrative capital of Putrajaya.

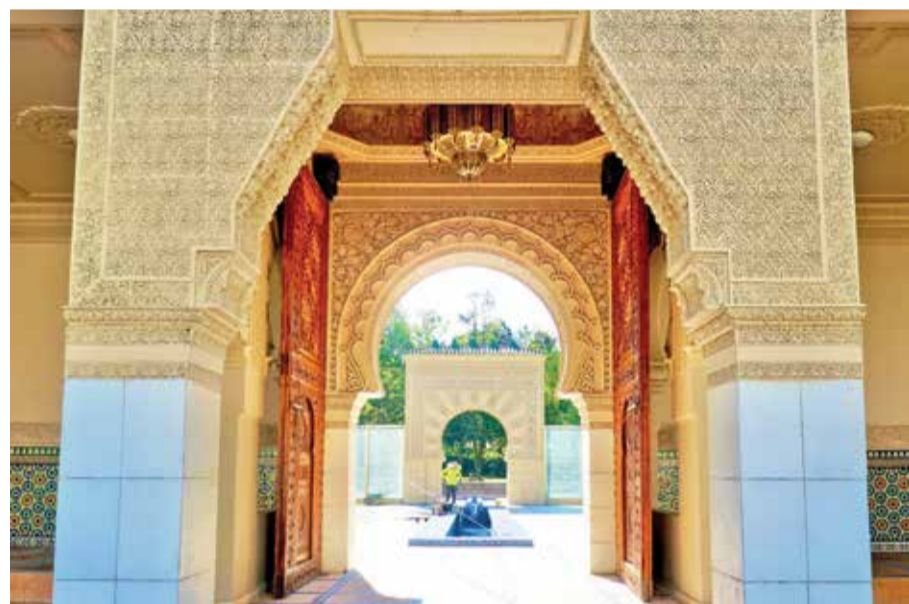
The Moroccan Pavilion is located within the botanical gardens in Putrajaya with the view of colorful flowers, and the capital's lake, while it was designed to display the civilization, culture, and rich and varied history of the arts and architecture of the four ancient Moroccan imperial cities, which are Fez, Meknes, Rabat, and Marrakesh, in a tropical environment that characterizes Malaysia.

Specialized craftsmen were recruited from Morocco to build the pavilion with the colorful mosaic arrangements,



Wooden gate of the building decorated with arabesque designs.

ornate inscriptions in Arabic calligraphy, geometric patterns of carvings, and arabesque designs, along with intricate carvings on wooden doors, wall panels, columns, ceilings, fountains and furniture. — KUNA



Huge wooden gate with ornate inscriptions in Arabic calligraphy, geometric patterns of curving.



The building is a symbol of cultural exchange between both countries.



Entrance of the building which is a crucial tourist destination for enthusiasts of culture.

Florida man nabs 19-foot invasive Burmese python

A Florida man caught a 19-foot (nearly six meter) Burmese python, believed to be a record for the southern US state. Jake Waleri, 22, nabbed the snake on Monday at Big Cypress National Preserve while out hunting for the invasive species, a pursuit incentivized by the state. In a video posted on Instagram, Waleri is seen grabbing the snake by the tail at the side of a road.

The snake then lunges for Waleri and tries to bite him as he grabs it by the neck, its mouth open wide. They wrestle for a while on the ground, until a friend helps Waleri subdue the creature, which weighed 125 pounds (56.6 kilos.) These snakes are not venomous

but they do have large, sharp teeth and dangerous bites. Waleri took this particular snake to the headquarters of an NGO called the Conservancy of South-west Florida in the city of Naples, on the Gulf of Mexico.

The organization measured and weighed the beast and declared it a record for Florida. Burmese pythons were originally brought to the United States as pets from Southeast Asia.

They have become a menace in south Florida since people released some of them into the Everglades in the 1970s. They have no natural enemy to keep their numbers in check. The snakes feed on other reptiles, birds, and mammals like raccoons or deer. They can grow to be six meters long, experts say. To protect the local ecosystem, the state of Florida pays hunters to catch and kill such snakes. The state also holds a yearly contest for amateur python hunters with a \$2,500 prize. — AFP



French war photographer Marie-Laure de Decker dies at 75

Marie-Laure de Decker, the French model who stepped behind the camera to become an internationally recognized war photographer, has died at the age of 75, her family said Saturday. She died in hospital on Saturday following a long illness, her family said. Born in Algeria — when it was still a French colony — she started her career as a model before deciding to branch out into photography.

In the late 1960s, she took memorable shots of the artists Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp and the writer Philippe Soupault. She covered the Vietnam War early in her career and met with success despite her relative lack of experience. "I said to myself: people are going to see that I'm not a real photographer," she wrote in a 1985 memoir. She only had an old Leica camera with her, she recalled.

"In fact, I realized afterwards, this old Leica was a marvel." She faced particular challenges working as a female war photographer, she said. "If you're a woman, you're never taken seriously." On the other hand, she added: "There is an advantage to being a woman, as was the case in South Africa — they don't kill you right away, they give you a chance."

Chad's Moussa Faki Mahamat, current chair of the African Union Commission, paid tribute to her on Saturday, speaking of his "great sadness" at the news of her death. Her images, he wrote on Twitter, "immortalized part of the history of Chad".

From war zones to celebrities

De Decker spent much of her career at the Gamma photo agency, from 1971 until it closed down in 2009. Their association ended on bad terms. When she

asked to get her photos back, she only got the black-and-white shots and not the color ones. She lost a subsequent legal bid to recover them and have her copyright recognized for their digital versions of the photos.

De Decker is also known for her photos of celebrities such as actors Catherine Deneuve and Charlotte Rampling, singer Serge Gainsbourg, Caroline of Monaco and France's former president, Valery Giscard d'Estaing. The money from those photos helped finance her missions in conflict zones, she said. "When you take photos of the poor, no one's interested. You have to take photos of the rich to sell (them)." In 2013, her work in conflict zones was recognized by the Albert Kahn International Planet Prize. She had two sons with lawyer Thierry Levy. — AFP



French photographer Marie-Laure de Decker poses with her Leica M4 camera at her home in Rabastens on April 15, 2013.



French press photographer Marie-Laure de Decker poses next to a self-portrait of her exhibition presented at the "Couvent des Minimes" during the 18th Festival International of Photojournalism "Visa pour l'image", on September 6, 2006, in Perpignan. — AFP photos

Spain's San Fermin bull run wraps up with 35 injured



Revelers raise their red scarves and candles as they sing the song "Pobre de Mi", marking the end of the San Fermin festival in Pamplona, northern Spain. — AFP photos



A participant runs ahead of a bull during the "encierro" (bull run) of the San Fermin festival in Pamplona.

Six men were injured Friday during the eighth and final bull run of Spain's famed San Fermin festival, bringing to 35 the total number of daredevils wounded during this year's fiesta. Five men between the ages of 29 and 61 were taken to hospital to treat bruises of varying degrees of severity, the regional government of Navarre said in a statement. A sixth man was treated in the infirmary of the northern city of Pamplona's bullring for bruises he suffered during the run, the local branch of the Red Cross said in a tweet.

The bulls from the Miura ranch in the southwestern province of Seville completed the 848.6-metre (928-yard) course from a holding pen to the city bull ring in two minutes and 21 seconds. Each morning from July 7-14, hundreds of daredevils, many wearing traditional



Participants get run over by a bull during the "encierro" (bull run) of the San Fermin festival in Pamplona.

white shirts with red scarves tied around their necks, tested their bravery by running ahead of a pack of bulls through the course set up in the narrow, winding streets of the medieval city.

The bulls face almost certain death in afternoon bullfights featuring Spain's top matadors. The San Fermin festi-

val, which was made famous by Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel "The Sun Also Rises", draws people from around the world. Three men who took part in this year's bull runs were gored, including a 58-year-old from the Dutch Caribbean island of Curacao.

Six Americans and a British and French national were among the other foreigners injured this year. Although the runs are over, the festival's closing ceremony will take place later at midnight (2200 GMT). Sixteen people have been killed in the bull runs since records started in 1911. The last death was in 2009 when a bull gored a 27-year-old Spaniard in the neck, heart and lungs. — AFP

Participants run ahead of bulls during the "encierro" (bull run) of the San Fermin festival in Pamplona.



Participants run ahead of bulls during the "encierro" (bull run) of the San Fermin festival in Pamplona.



Participants fall as they run ahead of bulls during the "encierro" (bull run) of the San Fermin festival in Pamplona.



First-responders of the Red Cross tend to an injured participant.

Jane Birkin, British-French celebrity and style icon, dies at 76

Jane Birkin, the British-born singer and actress who became a style icon in her adopted France, has died, a close source said on Sunday. She was 76. Birkin had been suffering from health problems in recent years that had forced her to cancel concerts. The cause of death and other details were not immediately available. Birkin catapulted to fame through her turbulent relationship with legendary singer-songwriter Serge Gainsbourg and her heavily accented French. With her flared jeans, mini dresses and messy bangs, Birkin was a fashion icon in the 1970s. In 1984, Hermes named one of its handbags after her, which remains a sought-after status symbol.

Turbulent love affair

She crossed the Channel in 1968 at the age of 22 to star in a film alongside Gainsbourg, who was 18 years her senior. It was the start of a 13-year relationship that made them France's most famous couple, in the spotlight as much for their bohemian and hedonistic lifestyle as for their work. Birkin, with her soft voice and androgynous silhouette, quickly became a sex symbol, recording a steamy duo with a growling Gainsbourg in 1969, "Je t'aime... moi non plus".



British actress and singer Jane Birkin poses in Deauville on September 12, 1985.

Banned on radio in several countries and condemned by the Vatican, the song was a worldwide success. "He and I became the most famous of couples in that strange way because of 'Je t'aime' and because we stuck together for 13 years and he went on being my friend until the day he died. Who could ask for more?" Birkin told CNN in 2006. "So Paris became my home. I've been adopted here. They like my accent," she said.

Style icon

The daughter of an actress and a naval officer, Birkin married James Bond composer John Barry, with whom she had a daughter, Kate. The mar-

riage lasted three years. She moved to France after meeting Gainsbourg on the set of a romantic comedy in which he was her co-star. They had a daughter, Charlotte, who became a hugely successful actress and singer.

The musical and romantic relationship between Gainsbourg and Birkin was famously tempestuous. During one of their raging rows, Birkin tossed herself into the River Seine after throwing a custard pie in Gainsbourg's face.

She blazed her own trail after walking out on France's favorite bad boy in 1980. In her around 70 films she has worked with leading French directors including Bertrand Tavernier, Jean-Luc Godard, Alain Resnais, James Ivory and Agnes Varda.

But she remained forever associated with Gainsbourg, who continued to write songs for her after their split, including "Les dessous chics" about lingerie being used to try to cover up a relationship on the rocks. "It's the most beautiful song about separation you could ever have," Birkin told AFP in a 2018 interview.

Her oldest daughter, Kate Barry, a photographer, died in an apparent suicide in 2013. Birkin is survived by her daughter with Gainsbourg, Charlotte, and her daughter Lou Doillon, a singer, whom she had during a 13-year relationship with French director Jacques Doillon. — AFP



British singer and actress Jane Birkin poses during a photocall for the film "Jane par Charlotte" (Jane By Charlotte) at the 74th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.

Key dates in the life of Jane Birkin

December 14, 1946: Born in London, her mother an actress.

1965: Aged 17, marries James Bond composer John Barry with whom she has a daughter, Kate. They divorce three years later.

1966: Comes to public attention in the swinging sixties classic film "Blow Up" by Michelangelo Antonioni, which wins the Palme d'Or at Cannes.

1968: After moving to Paris, she meets famous French singer-songwriter Serge Gainsbourg. They start a turbulent 13-year musical and romantic partnership.

1969: Her steamy duet with Gainsbourg, "Je t'aime, moi non plus", causes a scandal.

1984: Hermes creates the Birkin bag, which becomes a celebrity favorite.

1985: First of three nominations at the Cesars, France's Oscars, for "La

Pirate" directed by Jacques Doillon, her partner from 1980 to 1992.

1987: Performs in her first concert, at the Bataclan in Paris.

1998: Makes her first record without Gainsbourg, "A la legere".

2001: Made an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for her services to acting and British-French cultural relations.

2007: Directs her first film for cinema, "Boxes", which is given a special screening at the Cannes Film Festival.

2013: Apparent suicide of her daughter Kate Barry. She by then has two other daughters, Charlotte with Gainsbourg, and Lou with Doillon.

2021: Suffers a minor stroke. — AFP



British actress and singer Jane Birkin poses as she arrives for the closing ceremony of the 68th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southeastern France.



French singer Serge Gainsbourg and British actress Jane Birkin pose in September 1970.



British actress Jane Birkin and French singer Serge Gainsbourg pose during the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. - AFP photos

Lifestyle

An oppressive heat beats down on the central Iraqi province of Babylon, where drought and rising temperatures are hitting bees and honey production hard. Beekeeper Mohamed Aliawi knows it all too well as he checks on dozens of hive boxes placed at the feet of tall palm trees in the fields of Al-Raghila village. "There is no water and therefore no (flowering) plants to keep the bees satisfied," Aliawi, the deputy director of a local apiarist association, told AFP.

The earth is cracked, and growing melons and watermelons proves difficult due to a lingering drought and intense July temperatures often reaching around 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) - which take their toll on bees too. A bee needs to constantly forage for the pollen and nectar necessary for honey production. It is in constant movement, usually travelling hundreds of metres (yards) to find its bounty, said Aliawi.



A beekeeper checks on bee frames.



A beekeeper holds up a bee frame.

But the drought is forcing bees to travel longer — up to five kilometers (three miles) — to pollinate. "This impacts the lifespan of the worker bee", the female bee that gathers pollen and nectar, Aliawi explained. "Under optimal circumstances, the worker bee can live up to 60 days, but in this current situation it only lives 20 days." In addition, bees thrive in temperatures of around 30-35 degrees Celsius, not in searing heat, when the thermometer climbs to 50, said Aliawi, the manager of a private honey producer. He has moved dozens of bee hive boxes from central Iraq to seven sites scattered across the mountains of the northern autonomous Kurdistan region, where the air is cool-



Iraq honey production at the mercy of heat and drought

er and the land greener. "If we don't move the bees they suffer," he said.

Relocating hives

On a hot July day, Aliawi and his team wore protective headgear before inspecting the bee hive boxes and the honeycombs inside. They wafted smoke over the hives with a bee smoker, a procedure known to calm the insects. In the early 2000s, each bee hive yielded about 20 to 25 kilograms (44-55 pounds) of honey per year, whereas now the quantity has plunged to merely five kilograms, Aliawi said.

According to the United Nations, Iraq is one of the five countries in the world most impacted by some effects of climate change. Authorities say Iraq is going through its fourth-straight year of drought. The country has been plagued by scorching summers, declining rainfall and frequent sand storms, while upstream dams have reduced the flow of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers that run

across Iraq. Despite these woes, the head of the apiarist department at the agriculture ministry, Hashem al-Zeheiri, remains optimistic. Honey production is "increasing year on year", he said.



Beekeepers check on bee frames in the village of al-Raghila in central Iraq.



In 2022, honey produced in parts of Iraq controlled by the Baghdad federal authorities reached 870 tons, while in Kurdistan 850 tons were produced — up from about 700 tons in each territory the previous year. Zeheiri said he

Sand storms

The United Nations Development Program said in a 2020 report that "beekeeping has existed in Iraq... for an estimated 8,000 years", with "recipes that

use honey for medicinal purposes" inscribed on ancient Sumerian tablets.

In modern times, beekeeping in Iraq is dominated by men, but that has not stopped Zeinab Al-Maamuri. She developed a passion after discovering beekeeping through her late husband, who had taken it up as a hobby.

Three decades on and now in her early 50s, Maamuri has 250 bee hives in the province of Babylon, dozens of which she keeps in the courtyard of the family house. She lamented the effects of a warming planet on her bees. "The rise in temperatures affects bees... the queen stops laying eggs" when it is too hot, Maamuri said. And during the frequent sand storms that buffet the country, "if the bees are out, half will not return". — AFP



A beekeeper checks on bee frames at an apiary in the village of al-Raghila near Hilla in central Iraq. — AFP photos



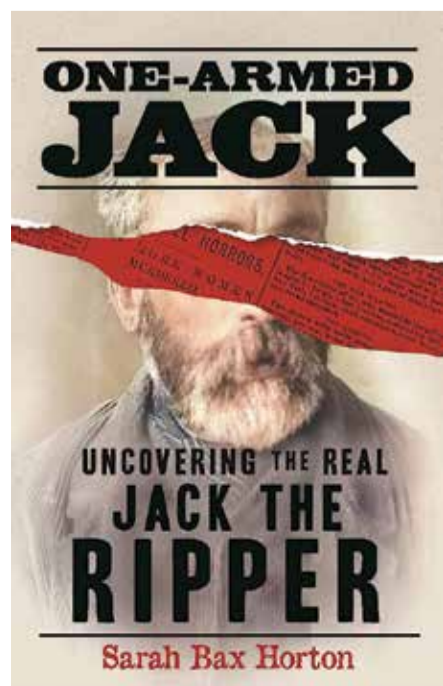
New book claims to reveal identity of 'Jack the Ripper'

The great-great-granddaughter of a police officer who investigated the "Jack the Ripper" murders in 19th century London believes she has uncovered the killer's true identity, the Sunday Telegraph reported. Sarah Bax Horton has written a book on her research into local cigar-maker Hyam Hyams, who she said closely matches witness descriptions from the time of a suspect seen with the victims. The "Jack the Ripper" murders, which saw at least six women killed in the East End of London in 1888, remain one of Britain's most notorious unsolved cases.

A whole industry has sprung up around the case, including books, exhibitions and tours around the streets of the Whitechapel district where the

women were killed. Bax Horton said she had identified Hyams, an epileptic and alcoholic who was in an out of mental asylums, as the likely culprit.

Witnesses at the time described a man seen with the victims who was in his mid-30s, with a stiff arm, irregular gait and bent knees. The author, whose



book "One-Armed Jack: Uncovering the Real Jack the Ripper" comes out next month, unearthed medical records for Hyams, who was aged 35 in 1888.

They showed he had an injury that left him unable to bend or extend his left arm, and also dragged his foot and could not straighten his knees. There were also close similarities in his height and build to the witness descriptions. Hyams had regular seizures due to epilepsy, the notes, taken from hospitals and asylums, indicated.

He was permanently committed to a mental asylum in September 1889, and died in 1913. Bax Horton, whose great-great-grandfather was posted at the headquarters of the investigation, concluded that Hyams, who had previously attacked his wife with a "chopper", killed because of his physical and mental decline, worsened by alcoholism. Hyams' name had been on a "long list" of potential suspects but she said he had "never before been fully explored as a Ripper suspect". Ripper expert Paul Begg called Bax Horton's findings a "well-researched, well-written, and long-needed book-length examination of a likely suspect". — AFP

Usher's ex-wife wants to drain Georgia's largest lake

The ex-wife of R&B singer Usher is calling to drain Georgia's largest lake, where her son was fatally injured 11 years ago. Fashion designer Tameka Foster has collected more than 2,500 signatures for her online petition imploring officials to "drain, clean, and restore" Lake Lanier, to allow for safety improvements and the removal of hazardous debris and other obstructions. Kile Glover, her 11-year-old son with Bounce TV founder Ryan Glover, died in July 2012 after a personal watercraft struck the boy as he floated in an inner tube on the lake.

"Draining, cleaning, and restoring Lake Lanier is not only necessary but also an opportunity to honor the memory of those who have lost their lives and prevent further tragedies," Foster wrote in her change.org petition, which she has also promoted on her Instagram page. Located roughly an hour's drive northeast of Atlanta, Lake Lanier covers nearly 60 square miles (155 square kilometers) and has waters up to 160 feet

(49 meters) deep. It's far from just a getaway for millions of boaters, anglers and other yearly visitors.



The lake provides drinking water for about 5 million people, according to the Chattahoochee Riverkeeper conservation group. And Buford Dam at the lake's southern end generates hydroelectric power for the metro Atlanta area. The Army Corps of Engineers constructed Lake Lanier in the 1950s. The Corps' district office in Mobile, Alabama, which still operates the lake, did not immediately return phone and email messages seeking comment Thursday.

Sports

Rodriguez wins Alpine stage as Vingegaard retains Tour lead

Defending champion fights off ferocious attack from Pogacar

MORZINE: Defending champion Jonas Vingegaard fought off a ferocious attack from Tadej Pogacar on the first of four Alpine tests in the Tour de France on Saturday as Spain's Carlos Rodriguez won stage 14. Vingegaard now leads Pogacar by 10 seconds after winning a war of nerves in the battle for the title that had hillside fans in raptures. Ineos rider Rodriguez climbed into third place overall, just one second ahead of Australian rider Jai Hindley, with a great climb and a daredevil downhill finish he later put down to his days in BMX.

"It's incredible, something I always dreamed of," said 22-year-old Rodriguez as Ineos won again following Michal Kwiatkowski's triumph on Friday. Vingegaard took the King of the Mountains climb points jersey but his mind was firmly fixed on the yellow overall leader's jersey he will wear for a ninth day Sunday. "It was a very hard fight once again today. I was happy to gain that second in the end," the Dane said with a broad smile that belied the vinegary atmosphere developing between him and Pogacar.

On the last of the day's ascents, Jumbo's Sepp Kuss took Vingegaard as far as he could before Pogacar's own lieutenant Adam Yates attacked with the Dane isolated. Pogacar then launched his blistering turn of pace and opened a five second gap only for the Dane to doggedly track and then reel in the exasperated Slovenian with 2km still to climb. Vingegaard drew level with his younger rival and eyed him, but the latter refused to look back.

Pogacar tried again atop the 17km climb to burst past last year's winner but was blocked in the narrow passage of fans by a motorbike carrying a photographer. Instead Vingegaard then burst ahead and took three bonus seconds at the top of that last climb. An infuriated Pogacar wasted precious ener-

gy racing past his rival in a show of anger, but later refused to be drawn on the episode. "If I have to draw a balance here it was a good, positive day and we can go into the coming days with confidence," he said. "As for the motorbike, it couldn't move, it is what it is," he said.

Vingegaard said the motorbikes had been close but "to talk about what might have been is useless". Tour organizers later banned the motorbike rider and photographer from Sunday's 15th stage. While all this was going on Rodriguez pulled back and drew level just after the hilltop before dashing off downhill to win the stage itself. The favorites end another stage still standing and holding their nerve in this tightly matched war of attrition.

A high altitude summit finish, a day off, a daredevil downhill dash and an individual race against the clock over the next three stages however could decide the winner. Vingegaard disagreed when asked if he thought downhill finishes were dangerous. "I don't think I would call it dangerous, it's as dangerous as you make it. If you go too hard it's dangerous, if you don't it's not," he said in his rational tone. Rodriguez took the day's honors thanks to his downhill dash. "My BMX past gave me the win today, my descending skills are one of my strong points," said the 22-year-old winner.

Fear and falls

France lost one of their home hopes when Romain Bardet suffered a race-ending crash as rain-slicked roads made for treacherous racing. Bardet and English rider James Shaw fell at speed on a downhill stretch after the day's first climb. A runner-up at the 2016 Tour de France and world championships in 2018, Bardet had been in 12th



MORZINE: Grenadiers' Spanish rider Carlos Rodriguez Cano celebrates in the finish area after winning the 14th stage of the 110th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 152 km between Annemasse and Morzine Les Portes du Soleil, in the French Alps. — AFP

overnight and was targeting a top five finish.

Ahead of the stage, the series of Alpine descents had put Gino Maeder's recent fatal crash in the Tour of Switzerland firmly in the minds of many in the peloton. Earlier, after a sudden shower, there was a mass fall on a corner just 5km after the start that

forced organizers to halt the race for 25 minutes. South African rider Louis Meintjes, 13th overall, suffered a broken collarbone and did not rejoin the race either. Spaniard Antonio Pedrero was evacuated on a stretcher and Colombian Esteban Chaves restarted but pulled out ten minutes later. — AFP

N Zealand seal 35-20 win over South Africa

AUCKLAND: New Zealand are on course to retain The Rugby Championship trophy after making an explosive start in their 35-20 win over South Africa in Auckland on Saturday. Two months before the Rugby World Cup kicks off, the All Blacks grabbed early tries by Aaron Smith and Shannon Frizell to dominate early on. Malcolm Marx and Cheslin Kolbe crossed as the Springboks fought back in the second half, before New Zealand's Will Jordan and Richie Mo'unga touched down late tries. Springboks flanker Kwagga Smith grabbed the visitors' third try just before the final whistle.

With the championship reduced to three rounds, the All Blacks are set to retain the title, sitting top of the table having thumped Argentina 41-12 in their opening match. "There were a lot of swings and roundabouts in the game, but the way we came through the challenges was something to be proud of," said New Zealand coach Ian Foster. "We stung them at the start with the tempo we played at." New Zealand captain Sam Cane saw a step up in performance from the away win in Argentina. "We're pleased to see improvement from last week, but we know we've still got a way to go from where we want to be," he said.

The skipper played down the neck injury which saw him miss the second half: "It was just a precautionary measure." South Africa coach Jacques Nienaber said the world champions were punished for a poor opening spell. "You can't start like that. You can't give away so many penalties and errors," he added. "I am proud of the way the guys came back in the second half, but we let it slip in the first 20 minutes." New Zealand dominated the opening half to lead 20-3 at the break.

Jordan dazzles

Jordan was in dazzling form, creating the opening try after just five minutes by jumping to his feet quickly after a tackle, carving through the defense to put Smith over for a converted try. Mo'unga extended New Zealand's lead with a penalty. The Springboks barely saw the ball in the opening quarter of an hour as the All Blacks enjoyed more than 90 percent possession.

Jordan again made inroads up the middle before sending the ball wide where Frizell bulldozed over South Africa full-back Willie le Roux to cross for their second try. South Africa thought Kolbe had scored after an aerial tussle out wide with Beauden Barrett, but the referee judged the ball was knocked on. Scrum-half Faf de Klerk landed a penalty as the Springboks needed 35 minutes to claim their first points, before Mo'unga slotted a second penalty just before half-time.

Springboks captain Eben Etzebeth, who played despite the death of his father earlier in the week, was held up just before the whistle. After Cane failed to come out after the break, De Klerk also went off injured early in the second half with what appeared to be a knee injury. South Africa grabbed their first try shortly after replacing their front row when replacement hooker Marx was muscled over by his pack. After All Blacks prop Tamaiti Williams came on for his debut, Kolbe dived over in the corner for South Africa's second try inside eight minutes.

Jordan touched down out wide for his 22nd try in as many Tests when he juggled the ball from a Beauden Barrett kick. Mo'unga ghosted through the defence from a scrum to claim the All Blacks' fourth try before Smith grabbed South Africa's consolation third just before the whistle. New Zealand face Australia away in a fortnight, in their final championship game, the same weekend South Africa host Argentina. New Zealand and South Africa meet again at Twickenham on August 25 in a pre-Rugby World Cup friendly. —AFP

Kuwait's Zankawi wins silver at Asia Championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait's athlete Issa Al-Zankawi won Saturday a silver medal at the Asian Athletics Championship currently held in the Thai capital of Bangkok, raising his country's record to two medals. Secretary of the Kuwait Athletics Federation (KAF) Hussein Al-Dashti told KUNA over the phone that Al-Zankawi won the second place at the Disc contest achieving outstanding progress with 60.23 meters.

Al-Dashti added that this medal came after the bronze one won by Kuwait's athlete Yaqoub Al-Youha who ranked third in the final of the 110-meter hurdles two days ago, praising the achievement of both Al-Zankawi and Al-Youha in the championship. He said there are still hopes for getting more medals at the game, which concludes Sunday, tomorrow.

He said the tourney kicked off last Wednesday has shown high-level technical performance in light of the participation of the Asian teams with the best athletes, in preparation for the global championship due in Hungary next month and the Asian games to be hosted by China in September. Al-Dashti thanked KAF chairman and members and technical, and administrative teams for their big role in backing Kuwaiti players. — KUNA



Kuwait's athlete Issa Al-Zankawi wins silver medal. — KUNA

Grant fires 62 to seize 6-shot LPGA lead

WASHINGTON: Sweden's Linn Grant shrugged off a near four-hour weather delay to torch Highland Meadows for a nine-under par 62 that gave her a six-shot lead in the US LPGA Dana Open on Saturday. Grant had an "amazing" hole out for eagle and eight birdies, but her hopes of joining compatriot Annika Sorenstam as the only players in LPGA history to shoot 59 evaporated with a bogey at the 16th hole.

Nevertheless, the 24-year-old was more than impressive on a long and demanding day in Sylvania, Ohio, where she said the weather delay actually helped her. "I played really well those first seven holes, but at the same time I felt like I didn't really have control over my swing," she said. "So coming in and then getting to go to the range again and warm-up and sort of get focused again, that really helped," added the Swede, whose 18-under par total of 195 put her six ahead of a group of five players on 201.



SYLVANIA: Linn Grant of Sweden putts on the 18th green during the third round of the Dana Open at Highland Meadows Golf Club in Sylvania, Ohio. — AFP

Allisen Corpuz, who captured her first major title at the US Women's Open at Pebble Beach on Sunday, headlined that group after a 68. Australia's Stephanie Kyriacou carded a 65 for her share of second while Finland's Matilda Castrén, Denmark's Emily Kristine Pedersen and Mexico's Maria Fassi all carded 67s to reach 12-under. Grant, who started the day two off the lead held by Annie Park, was unfazed

by steady rainfall as she birdied four straight holes from the second through the fifth.

Amazing eagle

She had a two-shot lead through seven holes when play was suspended. She stretched her lead with a birdie at the ninth and at the par-four 11th her second shot from the fairway bounced softly on the green and spun back

into the cup for an eagle. "Eleven was amazing," she said. "I hit a really good drive and a really good second shot, it just took one bounce pretty much and went in. Just really cool."

She added birdies at 12 and 13 to reach nine-under for the day with five to play - two of them par-fives. Linn said she tried not to think too much about the prospect of a 12-under 59 - although one spectator made sure it was on her mind. "He just came up to me and he said, 'Do you think you have a 59 in you?'" "And then all of a sudden I was like, 'Oh, God.'" Linn missed her first green of the day at the 16th and ended up with a bogey. She responded with a birdie at the par-five 17th before a par at the par-five 18th. Grant is chasing her first LPGA title.

She earned her tour card for last season but was barred from the US because of COVID vaccination requirements. She had four top-10 finishes in six LPGA starts outside the United States last year and also claimed four wins on the Ladies European Tour - including in the Scandinavian Mixed that was co-sanctioned by the men's tour. Corpuz had a closeup look at her game on Saturday, playing alongside Linn in the final group. "No one's going to catch up if she plays the way she did today," Corpuz said. — AFP

Ledecky aiming for swimming glory at worlds and beyond

TOKYO: Katie Ledecky said Saturday that it would be "neat" to cement her place in swimming immortality at this month's world championships and hinted she may compete at the 2028 Olympics. The American great can become the first swimmer ever to win six world titles in one event if she claims gold in the 800m freestyle in the Japanese city of Fukuoka. The competition begins next Sunday and Ledecky is aiming to add to her haul of 22 world championships medals, already a record for a woman. She will also try to add to her collection of seven Olympic gold medals in Paris next year but she is not ruling out extending her career to take part in the Los Angeles Games four years after that.

"I can say pretty confidently that I'm not going to be done in 2024," the 26-year-old said. "LA is definitely in the picture. I can't fully commit to it at this point in 2023 but if I'm still loving it and I feel like my body can do it, I think I would give it a shot." Of more

immediate concern to the 19-time world champion is winning in Fukuoka, where a battle royale awaits in her opening race - the 400m freestyle. Ledecky, the defending champion, will square off against Australia's Olympic champion Ariarne Titmus and Canadian world record-holder Summer McIntosh in one of the most anticipated races of the competition.

Showdown

Sixteen-year-old McIntosh is shaping up to be one of the stars of the championships and Ledecky cannot wait to lock horns. "There are a lot of great competitors in that race," said Ledecky, who has not faced Titmus since coming second at the pandemic-postponed Tokyo Olympics. "Of course, Summer and Ariarne have swum incredibly fast over the last two years. I know they'll be right there, and I know there are a lot of other contenders as well."

Titmus added spice to the encounter last month by suggesting that McIntosh lacks experience "on the international stage with the big pressure". Ledecky said she is "excited to see" what McIntosh can do and is aware of the threat she poses. "I remember racing Summer for the first time in Japan when she was only 14," Ledecky said of McIntosh, who broke Titmus's world record in March in a time of 3min, 56.08sec. "She's gotten better and better every year



Katie Ledecky

and has grown a lot as a swimmer."

Ledecky will compete in the 400m, 800m and 1,500m freestyle in Fukuoka. She owns the 15 fastest times ever in the 1,500m, and has won four of the past five world titles in that race. She has claimed 800m gold for the past five championships and she is excited at the thought of claiming a history-making sixth title in Japan. "It's neat - whether it happens or not, it's cool just to have that opportunity," she said. "I try to be consistent. I really love the 800 free and it's fun to have that opportunity." — AFP

Sports

Messi signs contract with Inter Miami through 2025

Inter Miami sink to rock bottom

MIAMI: Argentine superstar Lionel Messi has signed a contract through the 2025 season with Inter Miami, the Major League Soccer team announced on Saturday. The 36-year-old striker, who sparked Argentina to a World Cup title last year in Qatar, is set to be unveiled by the team in a Sunday ceremony and expected to join Inter Miami on the pitch by Friday. "I'm very excited to start this next step in my career with Inter Miami and in the United States," Messi said in a statement.

The seven-time Ballon d'Or winner's arrival in Miami from Paris Saint-Germain has already caused a sensation and is expected to spark greater interest in the game and MLS across the United States. It's also hoped the long-time Barcelona talisman can revive the fortunes of a Miami squad at the bottom of the MLS Eastern Conference at 5-13 with three drawn. "This is a fantastic opportunity and together we will continue to build this beautiful project," Messi said. "The

idea is to work together to achieve the objectives we set and I'm very eager to start helping here in my new home."

Messi's debut match is planned for Friday when Inter Miami will host Cruz Azul in the Leagues Cup, a revamped competition between MLS and Mexican league squads. It's the biggest boost for MLS since English star David Beckham, now a co-owner of Inter Miami, joined the Los Angeles Galaxy in 2007. He launched the MLS Miami squad in 2020 after years of trying to find a stadium site.

"Ten years ago, when I started my journey to build a new team in Miami, I said that I dreamt of bringing the greatest players in the world to this amazing city, players who shared the ambition I had when I joined LA Galaxy to help grow football in the USA and to build a legacy for the next generation in this sport that we love so much," Beckham said in a statement. "Today that dream came true. "I couldn't be prouder that a player of Leo's caliber is joining our

club... The next phase of our adventure starts here and I can't wait to see Leo take to the pitch."

'World's Greatest'

Inter Miami head coach Gerardo "Tata" Martino has managed Messi in two separate prior stints - with FC Barcelona in the 2013-14 campaign, winning the 2013 Spanish SuperCup, and from 2014-2016 with the Argentine national team. Maestro Messi captained the Albiceleste to victory at the 2021 Copa America as well as the Qatar World Cup and has records of 103 goals and 175 appearances for Argentina.

"We're overjoyed that the greatest player in the world chose Inter Miami and Major League Soccer," MLS commissioner Don Garber said. "His decision is a testament to the momentum and energy behind our league and our sport in North America." Messi is set for a glitzy arrival ceremony on Sunday at "The Unveil" with 18,000 expected to watch his first

public event with his new club, followed by his first training session on Tuesday.

"We made a promise to build an ambitious club that would attract the world's elite players," Inter Miami managing owner Jorge Mas said. "A heartfelt thank you to our fans that never stopped believing. Together we will continue to turn dreams into reality." With iconic Messi expected to be joined by Spanish midfielder Sergio Busquets, the hope is Inter Miami can rise from a doormat to a champion. "Lionel Messi is an incomparable talent," said Inter Miami sporting director Chris Henderson. "What he brings on and off the field will elevate everyone around him."

His legend has few rivals. Messi is a two-time World Cup Golden Ball winner, a three-time UEFA Men's Player of the Year Award winner who also has six La Liga Best Player titles. Messi is a four-time UEFA Champions League winner, an Olympic gold medal winner, has played on 10 La Liga champions, two Ligue 1 champions and taken seven Copa del Rey

titles. He played for Barcelona from 2004-2021 before joining Paris Saint-Germain for two seasons, making 75 appearances across all competitions, tallying 32 goals and 35 assists.

Inter Miami celebrated the signing of Messi on Sunday but did so after their winless run extended to 11 games with a 3-0 defeat at St Louis City on Saturday, leaving them rock bottom of Major League Soccer. Miami confirmed the arrival of Messi hours before their game kicked off in Missouri, but that couldn't inspire Gerardo Martino's team to victory as they suffered their 14th defeat in 22 games. Miami are bottom of the Eastern Conference and their latest loss also left them in last place in the overall standings - 29th of 29 clubs. MLS is suspending its play for a month while the Leagues Cup is played, meaning the 36-year-old former Barcelona star won't have a chance to start helping Miami up the league table until they host Charlotte on August 20. — AFP

Germany great Popp chases WCup glory to cap remarkable career

BERLIN: Germany captain Alexandra Popp will hope there is no repeat of her injury curse when she attempts to crown a towering career with Women's World Cup glory. The 32-year-old is one of the biggest stars in German sport having won every prize at club level, including two Champions Leagues with Wolfsburg. She won Olympic gold with Germany in 2016, but Popp's international career has often seemed to have been cursed, like when she missed the country's triumphant 2013 European Championship campaign with an ankle injury.

She missed Euro 2017 with a knee issue and was then heartbreakingly ruled out in the warm-up ahead of last year's Euro final against England due to injury, having scored in every one of Germany's five matches up to that point. Germany lost 2-1 in extra time at Wembley, with a forlorn Popp watching from the stands. Despite the injury setbacks Popp has scored 62 goals in 128 appearances for Germany, her standing rising alongside that of women's football in the country. Germany, who are in a group with Colombia, Morocco and South Korea, will be one of the favorites when the World Cup kicks off on Thursday in Australia and New Zealand.

Zookeeper goal-poacher

Popp has never been afraid to do things a bit differently. Despite being a self-declared fan of Borussia Dortmund, she attended the prestigious Gesamtschule Berger Feld in Gelsenkirchen, the home of their arch-rivals Schalke. Popp was the school's only female pupil and needed a special permit to attend.

Mesut Ozil, Manuel Neuer, Julian Draxler and Joel

Matip, all of whom played in the Royal Blue of Schalke, are among Berger Feld's other graduates. Alongside her football education, Popp did a one-year physiotherapy internship before completing a three-year zookeeping apprenticeship. Popp made her Bundesliga debut with Duisburg in 2008, having turned down French giants Lyon, and won the UEFA Women's Cup - precursor to the Champions League - in her first season.

She moved to women's football powerhouse Wolfsburg in 2012 and won a memorable treble of league, cup and Champions League in her first year. The Wolves repeated that feat the following season, with Popp scoring in the Champions League final. Last year Popp became the first woman to win German football magazine Kicker's Personality of the Year, placing her alongside legends of the game like Jurgen Klopp, Oliver Kahn and Franz Beckenbauer.

Leader off the pitch

Speaking ahead of Wolfsburg's Champions League final defeat by Barcelona in June, Popp said she was not always comfortable with the adulation she receives. "When you're sitting watching a musical and people aren't taking pictures of the stage but in your direction, it's sometimes a bit odd," she told reporters.

"I'm not going to pretend, I enjoy it to a certain extent," Popp added, before deflecting the attention towards the up-and-coming stars of women's football. "I'd like to see the young players featured even more because they are the future of women's soccer." Popp has emerged not only as one of Germany's best-known and popular athletes, but as a spokesperson for the women's game. In May she called out football administrators for their "empty words" for initially failing to secure broadcasting rights in Germany for the World Cup.

She also recently addressed a simmering controversy that the German women would receive lower World Cup bonuses than their male counterparts, saying her teammates were actually "more than satisfied". "It would absolutely send the wrong signal to stand up



EINDHOVEN: Alexandra Popp takes part in a training session at the Philips Stadium in Eindhoven. — AFP

now and say 'but we want more'," she said. With the men's team enduring their worst period on the field in a generation, Germany's women can restore some footballing pride - especially if Popp can stay fit. — AFP

Once 'humiliated', S Korea's Park set for third WCup

SEOUL: Park Eun-seon was "humiliated" a decade ago by unfounded claims about her sex but has put the episode behind her to stand on the cusp of a third Women's World Cup. And now the 36-year-old South Korean forward - who played her first World Cup 20 years ago - told AFP that she has one more ambition in what will be her farewell to the tournament. "I've never scored a goal at the World Cup and I'm training hard with the aim of scoring a goal," Park said ahead of the World Cup in Australia and New Zealand starting on Thursday. "As I always say, I'm really working hard now thinking this is my last World Cup."

Park's long career has been marked by exceptional highs but also real lows. Considered a child prodigy,

she joined South Korea's squad when she was a teenager and played in the 2003 World Cup. By the time she was 19 she had scored 11 goals for her country. There was domestic success too. In 2013 she was top scorer in the league with 19 goals, leading her team Seoul City Hall to second place. But her goals prompted six rival coaches to threaten a league boycott and demand a gender test.

The claim was shut down when South Korea's Human Rights Commission intervened, saying that the coaches' actions amounted to sexual harassment. "What happened is in the past and I don't remember much of it now," Park says, having described it at the time as "humiliating". She said in 2013 that she had undergone



SEOUL: South Korean female footballer Park Eun-seon (center) takes part in a training session of her team 'Seoul City Hall' at a football field in Seoul. — AFP

several eligibility tests in the past. "I scored a lot (in 2013) because I was given a lot of chances as my teammates were exceptionally good at the

time," she says now of the scrutiny. "There are coaches who have apologized since, and time has passed. I'm doing well now." — AFP

West Ham romp past Perth after Rice's exit

PERTH: West Ham moved on from the departure of captain Declan Rice Saturday with a 6-2 pre-season friendly victory over Perth Glory at Optus Stadium. Having earlier in the day confirmed Rice's drawn-out exit to Arsenal, they showed slick forward passing in front of 24,723 fans. But the Hammers needed a superb performance from goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski to help overcome several lapses in only their second game since last month's Europa Conference League triumph.

Having been in a long-winded saga over Rice's transfer, West Ham are one of only two teams not to have signed new players ahead of the English Premier League season starting next month. "He's a super player... he performed excellently for us," coach David Moyes said of his departed star. "Of course we've been preparing and getting things ready (for the summer transfer window)."

West Ham, who finished 14th in last season's Premier League, will wrap up their brief Australian tour against Tottenham Hotspur on Tuesday in Perth. "We've scored six goals today, that's what we want to see," said Moyes, after a free-wheeling second half in which his side scored four. "We didn't play quite so well in the first half, but were much better and stronger in the second half." With several star players absent, a youthful West Ham hit the scoreboard in the second minute after a low cross from Dan Chesters diverted into the leg of Glory defender Darryl Lachman and into his own net.

After a sluggish start, Glory began to penetrate a scrambling West Ham defence, only to be denied by Fabianski on multiple occasions. West Ham made Glory rue those missed chances when Pablo Fornals was brought down in the box by Johnny Koutroubis, who received a yellow card. Striker Gianluca Scamacca, who has been linked with a move to Roma, easily dispatched the penalty to give West Ham an early stranglehold.

But Glory dictated down the right wing and were finally rewarded moments before half-time through an own goal from defender Luizao. Moyes rang the changes and it paid dividends when star Jarrod Bowen rifled a left-foot shot into the net to give West Ham a 3-1 lead. Emerson Palmieri's header extended West Ham's advantage, but Glory hit back through Daniel Bennie's powerful shot. Glory's resistance ended when 18-year-old Divin Mubama sealed West Ham's victory with a header before Bowen completed his brace. — AFP

Classifieds

Hospitals & Clinics

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Change of Name

I, **Zulfikar** holder of Indian Passport No. Z4063102 having permanent address Boharwadi, Nai Abadi, Bhinder, Udaipur, Rajasthan, 313603, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as **Zulfikar** (given name) and **Boheda** (surname).

I, **Abbas Ali**, holder of Indian Passport No. P7118093, having permanent address 14, Gali G, Kharol Colony, Fatehpura, Girwa, Udaipur, Rajas-

than, 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 declare 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**

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NO ESCAPE FROM ALCARAZ

Spaniard beats Djokovic in five sets to win first Wimbledon title



WIMBLEDON: Spain's Carlos Alcaraz holds the winner's trophy as he poses with Serbia's Novak Djokovic after their men's singles final tennis match on the last day of the 2023 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club on July 16, 2023. — AFP

LONDON: Carlos Alcaraz defeated seven-time champion Novak Djokovic to claim his first Wimbledon title on Sunday, shattering the Serb's dream of a record-equaling 24th Grand Slam crown. World number one Alcaraz recovered from dropping the first set and saving a set point in the second to win 1-6, 7-6 (8/6), 6-1, 3-6, 6-4 after four hours and 42 minutes on Centre Court.

It was a second major for the 20-year-old Spaniard following his US Open title last year as he became Wimbledon's third youngest men's champion. The result will also spark feverish speculation over the start of a generational shift, with 36-year-old Djokovic carrying the torch of the 'Big Three' now that Roger Federer is retired and Rafael Nadal is sidelined, perhaps permanently.

Australian Open and French Open champion Djokovic had been bidding to equal Federer's re-

cord of eight Wimbledon titles and match Margaret Court's all-time mark of 24 Slams. When he won his first major at the Australian Open in 2008, Alcaraz was still three months shy of his fifth birthday. Djokovic was playing in his ninth final at Wimbledon and 35th at the majors, while for Alcaraz it was just a second in the Slams following his US Open triumph.

The Serb went into the match not having lost on Centre Court since his 2013 final defeat to Andy Murray and he hit with relentless precision in the first set. Alcaraz, who had been crippled by body cramping in his loss to Djokovic in the French Open semi-final in June, was unable to settle and let a break point slip away in the seven-minute opening game.

Golden chance

Djokovic took advantage and raced into a 5-0 lead on the back of a double break before the Span-

iard got on the board. It was too little, too late as Djokovic claimed the opening set with a smash. But Alcaraz finally freed himself of his shackles and broke for 2-1 in the second set. Djokovic hit straight back in the third game before saving a break point in the fourth, coming out on top of a 29-shot rally. The Serb was hit with a time violation in the tie-break before seeing a set point saved.

Alcaraz needed no second invitation when he carved out and converted a set point to level the contest with a backhand winner. The marathon set had taken 85 minutes as Djokovic's run of 15 tie-breaks won in a row at the majors ended. Alcaraz broke in the opening game of the third set and again after an exhausting 26-minute fifth game, which went to 13 deuces and saw Djokovic save six break points before he cracked on the seventh.

Alcaraz backed it up with a rapid-fire service

game which took just two minutes in comparison and broke again against the dispirited defending champion to move two sets to one ahead. Djokovic argued with umpire Fergus Murphy over his monitoring of the shot clock and did little to endear himself with the crowd by taking a lengthy toilet break before the fourth set. However, the break worked wonders as the Serb broke twice in the set, levelling the final courtesy of Alcaraz's seventh double fault of the final.

Djokovic wasted a golden chance to break for 2-0 in the decider with a wild smash and Alcaraz made him pay, breaking for 2-1. A frustrated Djokovic collected another code violation for destroying his racquet against the net post before he slipped 3-1 down. Alcaraz was not to be denied and he claimed a famous victory when Djokovic buried a forehand in the net. — AFP

'Like Jabeur': Young Tunisian girls dream of tennis glory

TUNIS: At a sporting club in Tunis, young girls enthusiastically hit yellow tennis balls across the court in the hope of one day making it to Wimbledon, like their idol Ons Jabeur. As the tennis star tried but failed for a third time to become the first African or Arab woman to win a Grand Slam singles title on Saturday, a tournament took place at the Tennis Club of Tunis in the Alain Savary neighborhood, near the centre of the Tunisian capital.

On the dozen sunny courts, surrounded by large trees, Tunisian boys and girls vigorously compete in several matches surrounded by their families. Ibtissem Treimech, the mother of one player says, "when they see Ons Jabeur ... succeeding as a finalist, the children and parents are inspired, and the parents encourage their children to play tennis".

In a country where football reigns supreme, Jabeur has become a national icon and sparked a newfound enthusiasm for tennis over the past three years, especially among young girls. Like Jabeur, many of them come from working-class backgrounds. "I am capable of becoming like Ons Jabeur and participating in Grand Slam tournaments like Wimbledon and Roland Garros," Lina Chedi, a nine-year-old tennis player and Ibtissem's daughter, told AFP.

Disappointed fans

Yasmine Ben Mabrouk, also nine, has no doubts over her own talent. "I think I will become a great tennis player like Ons Jabeur, and I will participate in very big matches," she said. Not far away, 10-year-old Emna Bartagisse says she will "become better than Ons Jabeur." Jabeur defines herself as a "100 percent product of Tunisia", and her fans praise her for her dynamic game, which includes drop shots and approaches to the net, and her sense of camaraderie. The star continues to push the limits, despite a



TUNIS: (Left - right) Nine-year-old Lina Chedi, nine-year-old Yasmine Ben Mabrouk, and ten-year-old Emna Bartagisse enter the court ahead of a local tournament at the Tennis Club of Tunis. — AFP

sometimes difficult period following a series of recent injuries to her wrist and calf. Before Saturday's final at the All England Club Jabeur said she had "learned to be very patient and to accept everything that has happened to her regarding injuries."

But her straight-sets defeat at Wimbledon, where Marketa Vondrousova won 6-4, 6-4, broke the hearts of her fans back home. "I am disappointed because Ons has lost. Such a shame," said Ben Chedly, a boy who watched the game at the Gammarth tennis club in Tunis. Chedly's brother Mehdi is also upset, insisting that victory for Ons was close but "she does not know how to control herself". "When she thinks she is winning, she does not play like when she is trying to win," he added.

Jabeur hails from the seaside resort town of Sousse and is adored by fans and spends time after each match signing autographs and posing for selfies. Since she came into the spotlight in January 2020 at the Australian Open, becoming the first Arab woman to reach a Grand Slam quarter-final, the soon-to-be 29-year-old has become a source of national pride for Tunisia. More recently, she was nicknamed the "Minister of Happiness" for her ability to uplift a country grappling with serious economic and political crises since the power grab by President Kais Saied in the summer of 2021. — AFP

Jabeur vows to end Grand Slam misery

LONDON: Tearful Wimbledon runner-up Ons Jabeur described her third defeat in a Grand Slam final as the "most painful" of her career as she vowed to learn from the tennis greats who were also jinxed at the majors. World number six Jabeur was beaten 6-4, 6-4 by unseeded Czech Marketa Vondrousova on Saturday, one year after she lost the Wimbledon

final to Elena Rybakina. More pain followed at the US Open later in the year where she was runner-up again, this time to Iga Swiatek.

The 28-year-old is only the eighth woman to lose her first three Grand Slam finals. However, she can take comfort from knowing that the likes of Chris Evert, Kim Clijsters and Simona Halep also suffered the same fate before going on to capture Grand Slam titles. "It will be tough to speak. I am going to look ugly in the photos so that's not going to help," said Jabeur after again being thwarted in her bid to become the first Arab or African woman to win a Grand Slam singles title. — AFP

Maguire stripped of Man Utd captaincy

LONDON: Harry Maguire announced Sunday he is no longer captain of Manchester United following talks with manager Erik ten Hag. Reports earlier this month suggested Ten Hag was set to remove the England international from the role following Maguire's limited appearances under the Dutch boss last season. The central defender made just eight Premier League starts, sparking speculation over his future with the English giants.

But what is now certain is he will no longer be the skipper at Old Trafford, with Maguire writing on Twitter: "After discussions with the manager today he has informed me he is changing captain. He outlined his reasons to me and whilst I'm personally extremely disappointed, I will continue to give my all every time I wear the shirt." The 30-year-old added: "So I wanted to say a massive thank you to the Manchester United fans for all their brilliant support whilst I've been wearing the armband."

"Since the day I took on the role, three-and-a-half years ago, it's been a huge privilege to lead Manchester United and one of the proudest moments of my career to date. "It's one of the greatest honors in club football. I've done everything I possibly could to help United be successful - on and off the field. "I will always be grateful to Ole Gunnar Solskjaer for first giving me the



Harry Maguire

responsibility and I wish whoever now takes it on every success and they will have my full support." Bruno Fernandes was most frequently named captain in Maguire's absence last season and the Portugal midfielder is the favourite to be given the role on a full-time basis.

Maguire has made over 170 appearances for United since being signed from Leicester for £80 million (\$105 million, 93 million euros) in 2019. But the past two seasons have seen Maguire become the butt of social media jokes following some high-profile errors on United duty, although he has remained an England regular under manager Gareth Southgate. With the arrival of Argentina's Lisandro Martinez having also restricted his first-team opportunities at Old Trafford last season, Maguire has been linked recently with a move to Premier League rivals West Ham. — AFP